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ABSTRACT

The quality of the academic standards in America's public schools is one of the pressing issues on the minds of parents and the public. This document, the second annual report by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), examines how many states are committed to setting common academic standards and analyzes the quality of the standards against AFT criteria. It also reports on states' intentions to assess whether students are meeting the standards, to provide extra academic help to students who are not meeting the standards, and to attach meaningful consequences to the standards. Findings are based on interviews with officials and analysis of documents from the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Section 1 describes the AFT criteria for judging state reforms. Section 2 presents national figures regarding the quality of state standards, the work under way on assessments, and the plans for student incentives linked to the standards. Charts with state-by-state data on major issues described in section 1 are included. Section 3 offers recommendations to states for ensuring successful reforms. The fourth section elaborates on findings for each state and contains a state-by-state analysis. The final section contains official responses to the report received from 22 states. Some major findings are: (1) The commitment to standards-based reform remains very strong in the states--48 states are developing common academic standards for their students; (2) states view the core disciplines as the proper organizing vehicle for academic standards, but vague language and insufficient grounding in content remains a problem; and (3) more states recognize the need for internationally competitive standards, but few have taken steps to develop them or have done a thorough job. (LMI)

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MAKING **STANDARDS** MATTER **1996**

AN ANNUAL FIFTY-STATE REPORT ON EFFORTS TO RAISE ACADEMIC STANDARDS

ED 410 660

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MAKING **STANDARDS** MATTER **1996**

AN ANNUAL FIFTY-STATE REPORT ON EFFORTS TO RAISE ACADEMIC STANDARDS

AMERICAN
FEDERATION
OF TEACHERS

The **American Federation of Teachers** (AFT) represents the professional, economic and social concerns of over 900,000 members, primarily elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty and other school employees. The AFT is committed to helping its members bring excellence to America's classrooms and full professional status to their work.

Albert Shanker, *President*

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■■■

Making Standards Matter 1996 is a publication of the AFT Educational Issues Department. The department provides members with research, publications, technical assistance and training programs related to their professional concerns.

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Executive Summary

The quality of the academic standards in America's schools is one of the most pressing issues on the minds of parents and public. It is also something that teachers and others who work in schools care deeply about. *Making Standards Matter* is an annual report by the American Federation of Teachers designed to analyze the quality of the academic standards in the fifty states and to monitor the extent to which those standards will drive major changes in the schools.

We first issued *Making Standards Matter* in the summer of 1995, five years after the first National Education Summit and one year after the Clinton administration's Goals 2000 and Title I programs were authorized by Congress. The good news was that nearly every state was working to set common academic standards for their students. But good intentions were not necessarily resulting in strong standards. We made it clear in our report that most states had more work to do to strengthen their standards and we warned that the lack of rewards and consequences attached to state standards would severely diminish their effectiveness.

Much work has taken place in the states over the past year and we try to capture that work in this edition of *Making Standards Matter.* We once again report on how many states are committed to setting common academic standards for their students and we analyze the quality of the standards against criteria that we feel are important. We also report on states' intentions to assess whether students are meeting the standards, to provide extra academic help to students who are not meeting the standards, and to attach meaningful consequences to the standards so that students and others take them seriously. Below are our major findings and our recommendations for moving forward. These items are elaborated on in Sections II and III of this report.

Major Findings

- **The commitment to standards-based reform remains very strong in the states—48 states are developing common academic standards for their students**

- **States view the core disciplines as the proper organizing vehicle for academic standards, but vague language and insufficient grounding in content remains a problem**

- **More states recognize the need for internationally competitive standards, but few have taken steps in this direction and none have done a thorough job**

- **Despite the weaknesses of their standards, states do not need to start from scratch—most have strong standards in one or more subjects that can be used as models to improve the others**

- **States are having more difficulty setting strong standards in English and social studies**

- **All but a few states will develop assessments to measure whether their students are meeting the state standards, but the standards are not strong enough in most states to provide a solid foundation for the assessments**

- **Less than half of the states plan to make their standards "count" for students**

- **Only 10 states require and fund intervention programs to help low-performing students reach the state standards**

- **In the states where graduation exams are in use or being planned, there are clear trends toward increased rigor and alignment with state standards**

- **Eight states will offer "differentiated diplomas" as a way of motivating students to reach high standards**

Recommendations for Moving Forward

1) States need to be supported in their efforts to raise standards

2) States need help to make sure their standards are rigorous and internationally competitive

3) States should look to the strongest standards in other states as a guide when developing or revising their own

4) States should supplement their standards with curriculum frameworks that provide clearer guidance to districts and schools without sacrificing local control

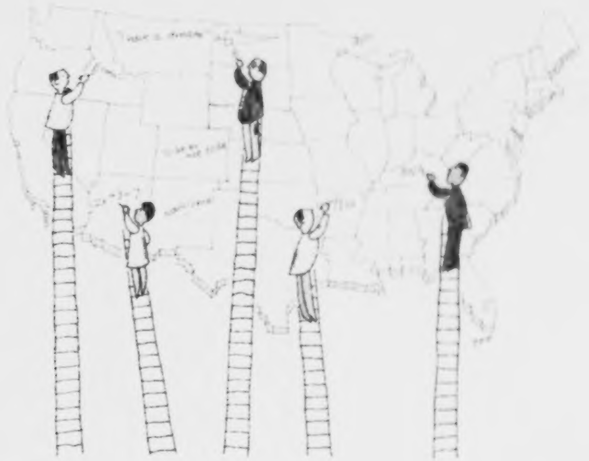
5) States need to make sure their assessments are based on strong standards

6) States should establish plans for phasing in consequences

7) States must provide extra help to students who are not meeting the standards

This second edition of our report comes at a crucial time for education in this country. Several months ago, at the second National Education Summit, the nation's governors, business and education leaders committed themselves to the pursuit of world-class academic standards for America's children. This report offers a glimpse into where the states are on this agenda today and how far they have to go in the future.

Introduction



Over the past several years, one issue has come to dominate the national discussion about improving the schools more than any other: **standards.** The idea is to set clear standards for what we want students to learn and to use those standards to drive other changes in the system.

This may sound like common sense, but the idea is a relatively new one in this country. Some of our teachers, schools, and communities have always had high expectations for their children, but until recently, there has been little effort at the national, state, or local levels to set clear, measurable standards for what all students in elementary and secondary schools should know and be able to do in the core academic subjects. We haven't organized our curriculum around a clearly defined set of expectations, nor have we developed assessment systems that measure whether students are meeting rigorous, publicly available standards.

The result, not surprisingly, is that students have been learning different things from school to school, district to district, and state to state, and our expectations for them have not been high enough. Some children get exposed to rigorous courses; others don't. Some students only get good grades if they master challenging material; others get good grades and promotions no matter what they do. Typically, students get passed from grade to grade regardless of how much they learn, and many graduate not even realizing how unprepared they are. Teachers who try to uphold high academic standards with tough grading and promotion policies and demanding homework loads are often pressured by administrators, parents, and students to ease up. In the absence of clear standards, they are powerless.

Without a system of standards, student mobility is also a major problem. Every year, one-fifth of students move from school to school. In low-income neighborhoods, the rates are much higher. With no common standards in place, mobile students usually arrive in their new classrooms way behind or ahead of the other students, which places a considerable strain on the teacher, the student, and the entire class. A significant amount of class time is spent just trying to figure out what the new students have learned at their previous schools.

Another consequence of our lack of clear standards is that components of the system that should be well-aligned and working together—curriculum, assessment, teacher education, professional development—are largely disconnected. Most of the assessments students take over the course of their school careers are not directly tied to the curriculum they are studying. So they're being tested, but not on what they are learning in school. And most training and professional development programs for teachers and other school staff also lack a focus and a clear connection to the curriculum.

The hope of the standards movement is that we can turn all of these things around. With clear and rigorous standards to guide us, we can focus all our energies and resources on improving the academic performance of our students. We can help guarantee that all children, regardless of background or neighborhood, will be exposed to a rigorous academic curriculum throughout their educational careers. We can hold students to much higher standards than they have been expected to meet in the past. We can ensure that the standards and curriculum will be common across schools and districts, reducing the problems and frustrations of student mobility. We can make the necessary resources and assistance available to those students in danger of failing. And we can put an end to the destructive, deceiving practice of social promotion. *It all starts with a strong set of standards.*

■■■

This report is an effort to assess how far our work on standards has progressed over the years, and how much farther we have to go to achieve success. It focuses on the activities of the states, because that's where the responsibility for these reforms ultimately rests. The federal role is one of encouragement and support. States are in the driver's seat.

We first issued *Making Standards Matter* in the summer of 1995, five years after the first National Education Summit and one year after the Clinton administration's Goals 2000 and Title I programs were authorized by Congress. Although most states were still in the early stages of the standards-setting process, we thought it was important to take a look at the preliminary results of their efforts. Last year, we asked five questions about each state's strategy. We wanted to know whether a state had standards, how clear and specific they were, whether they were benchmarked or compared to standards in other countries, whether the state would measure student achievement of these standards, and whether students would have to meet the standards in order to graduate from high school.

In this year's report, we examine the same issues but in greater depth. In addition to giving an overall judgment on the quality of each state's standards, we provide a subject-by-subject analysis. This allows us to point out which subjects are done well and which need more work. We also report on changes to the standards over the past year and we show whether those changes led to an improvement or decline in quality for each subject.

Our coverage of what it means to make standards "count" has also expanded. We continue to look at the relationship between state standards and graduation requirements, as we did last year, but we also report which states will make their standards a factor in student promotion decisions in earlier grades, and we examine which states will provide intervention programs and extra help for students who are not meeting the standards.

In putting together this report, we interviewed officials and analyzed standards and curriculum documents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Determining the clarity and quality of the standards in each state required the careful analysis of hundreds of documents. The rest of the data comes from our interviews with state officials.

We have worked hard to make sure our information is accurate and up to date. With dozens of new standards documents coming out of the states every month, it was a real challenge to keep on top of the latest drafts. We feel we have done so in nearly every state, and in the few cases where drafts became available too late for us to review, we have indicated that on the state page.

As an accuracy check and a courtesy to states, we sent our draft findings to each state superintendent and deputy superintendent a month in advance of our publication deadline. We asked them to make us aware of any inaccuracies or inconsistencies so that we could make the necessary changes. We also offered to publish state responses in our report as we did last year. We consider this an important way to develop the kind of ongoing dialogue that will lead to changes and improvements over time. Indeed, we regard such dialogue as critical to standards-based reform. As a fortunate confirmation of our hopes for this process, we heard back from more than two-thirds of the states this year, more than double the number that responded last year.

This report consists of five major sections. All of the issues we explore and the questions we answer about the states are explained in Section I, *AFT's Criteria for Judging State Reforms.* We strongly recommend that readers examine these criteria before trying to understand our overall findings or our judgments about any particular state. Section II, *How the States Measure Up*, contains the major findings from our research. Here we present national figures regarding the quality of state standards, the work under way on assessments, and the plans for student incentives linked to the standards. This section also includes charts with state-by-state data on each of the major issues described in Section I.

Section III, *Recommendations for Moving Forward*, is new this year, and it is very important to us. It allows us to pull out the most critical issues from all of the data and information we have collected and offer suggestions to states and others for how to resolve the problems they face and ensure the success of their reforms.

In order to provide readers with more detailed information about each state, we have expanded our report this year to elaborate on our findings for each state. These "state pages" can be found in Section IV, *State-by-State Analysis.* The information is meant to complement, and in many cases explain, the information in the charts found in Section II. We recommend that anyone wishing to get a clear picture of the activities in a given state consult both the charts and the state pages.

The final section of the report contains the official responses we received from states after sending them our criteria and draft findings. Twenty-two states sent letters that we have published in this year's report. We heard from 14 additional states, but these were handwritten notes or edits that were not in a publishable form.

Our goal with this report is to help ensure that the standards movement in this country succeeds. By highlighting the essential questions people should be asking about state reforms and by offering constructive criticism, we hope we can contribute to the conversations that are already taking place in states, communities, and schools around the country about the quality of the academic standards.

We also hope this report helps to foster a more constructive national dialogue around these issues. The National Education Summit held earlier this year helped do this, and it is possible that the governors, business, and education leaders will use the momentum generated at the Summit to create a national reporting mechanism that might produce information and analyses similar to that found in this report. We hope to see mounting support for this idea, particularly if attention will focus on helping states determine whether their standards are rigorous and internationally competitive. This is an area where there are currently very few resources and scarcely little expertise at the national and state levels. (For more information, see the resources section at the end of this report.)

Standards can be much more than a buzzword or an educational fad. It will take time, diligence, and an eye toward quality, but if states and communities can pull together, they will see results. That's what we hope the standards movement will be all about.

I. AFT's Criteria for Judging State Reforms

The AFT believes that the success of school reforms in the states will depend in large part on the quality of the academic standards states set for their children and also on how seriously those standards are taken by everyone connected with the schools. This report is designed to highlight some of the characteristics of high-quality standards and of systems that support such standards. We don't claim to have covered every important question that needs to be asked, but we do feel that each of the issues we raise here is crucial for states to address.

What follows are the specific criteria we use to analyze states' reform efforts. We ask separate questions about standards, assessments, and the extent to which the standards will "count." It is very difficult to understand the conclusions we reach about any particular state without first reading this section.

Standards

Issue 1: Does the state have or is it in the process of developing standards in the four core academic subjects?

What are students expected to learn in each of the core academic subjects? This question is at the heart of what a good set of achievement standards should convey. Here we are interested in showing which states are committed to setting common academic standards for their students, and of the states setting standards, which ones are basing their standards in the four core academic disciplines—English, math, science, social studies. (The AFT believes that a full core academic curriculum should include the arts and foreign languages. In this report, we limited our review to the four core subjects the states have taken up first.)

In our view, it is not enough for state standards to simply touch upon or reference the disciplines. Each discipline represents a body of knowledge and a "disciplined" way of thinking that have evolved over centuries. To be complete, a set of standards must embody the knowledge and habits of mind essential to each of the core subjects, and in our opinion, this cannot be accomplished by trying to fit disciplinary knowledge into broad over-arching categories such as "critical thinking" and "problem solving." If standards-setters ignore or significantly blur disciplinary boundaries, there is a real danger that the integrity of the disciplines—the essential knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that make each subject unique—will get lost.

Although there may be real value in interdisciplinary study, we believe this should be a pedagogical decision rather than a broad policy imperative shaped by state standards. In other words, the standards themselves should not be interdisciplinary. Standards are meant to define what is essential for students to learn. They should not dictate how that material should be taught. Those decisions are best left to the professionals in the schools.

How We Made Our Judgment

This criterion was easy to assess. We simply wanted to know which states have standards documents, regardless of what they are called (standards, frameworks, objectives, etc.), that describe what students should know and be able to do in each of the core academic subjects. States that have standards documents (or are planning to develop them) in each of the core academic subjects receive credit in this category. Our intention with this criterion is not to judge the quality of the standards, but to give states credit for having public standards documents focused on the four core disciplines. Qualitative judgments are discussed in *Issue 2.*

Since many states are in the process of developing standards, we are giving credit to those that intend to develop them in each of the core subjects, even if they only have drafts available in a few subjects. In the *State-by-State Analysis* section of this report, we note which standards documents are completed, which are in draft form, and which are planned but not yet available for review.

Issue 2: Are the standards clear and specific enough to provide the basis for a common core curriculum?

Standards should be the glue that holds the various components of the educational system together. They should be the foundation for the work of curriculum and assessment developers; they should guide textbook publishers and others who develop instructional materials; and they should provide a clear focus for professional development and preservice training for all school staff. Standards should also serve another very important function. They should provide the foundation for ensuring that all students, whether in poor or wealthy districts, are exposed to a rich, challenging curriculum and held to high expectations for achievement.

Both of these goals are jeopardized if standards are not clear and specific about what students should learn. Standards that are too broadly stated or too vague will engender too much variation across districts and schools, reducing the chances that all students within the state will have access to a common core of knowledge and skills. And all too often, it is the children in poorer districts who are the victims of vague standards and watered-down curricula. Insufficiently specific standards also make it difficult to ensure that curriculum, assessment, and professional development are well aligned. The more broad and vague the standards, the greater the chance of widely differing interpretations by people across the state. The likely result is less, rather than greater, alignment in the system and the possibility that lower levels of achievement will be tolerated.

There is another reason why clear and specific standards are important. It is estimated that one-fifth of all school-age children move from school to school each year. Over one-third of students transfer in and out of schools in high-poverty areas. Transient students usually arrive in new schools either way behind or ahead of their classmates because of the lack of a common curriculum. Their new teachers then have to determine how much the new students know relative to the rest of the class. It is a frustrating process for the teacher and the entire class, and a significant amount of instructional time is lost. If states develop standards that are very clear about what students should learn each year, the transition for those mobile students—and the challenge to their new teachers—could be significantly eased.

How We Made Our Judgment

In looking at each state's standards documents, we had to determine whether there was enough information about what students should learn to provide the basis for a "common core curriculum" and thereby serve the functions described above. There is no perfect formula for this—it requires a series of judgment calls. In our view, a core curriculum should probably take up somewhere between 60 and 80 percent of the academic curriculum, leaving the flexibility for districts, schools, and teachers to fill in the remaining 20 to 40 percent. States that organize their standards grade by grade and thoroughly ground their standards in content probably do the best job of specifying what students should learn and when they should learn it. But some states that do not have grade-by-grade standards also provide enough clear academic content to meet our criterion.

Following are five of the qualities we look for in order to determine whether a set of standards meets our "common core" criterion:

1) Standards must define in every grade or at designated grade-level benchmarks the common content and skills students should learn in each subject. No matter how clear and specific standards may be, if they do not indicate the various ages or grades by which time students should be expected to master the material, they are not very useful. That is the first thing we look for in a standards document—references to grade levels or clusters. Documents without this not only fail our "common core" criterion, they fall into the "unusable" category (see diagram on p. 5).

2) Standards must be detailed and comprehensive enough to lead to a common core curriculum. As mentioned earlier, good standards should provide the basis for 60 to 80 percent of the academic curriculum. In other words, they must provide clear guidance to teachers, curriculum and assessment developers, textbook publishers, and others, such that one person's interpretation of what students should learn in a particular grade level or cluster wouldn't be very different from someone else's. To accomplish this, standards need to reflect the breadth and depth of each subject area. While we do not attempt to judge the overall quality or rigor of the content covered in each state, we do point out obvious holes—for example, social studies standards that don't substantially cover history and civics, or English standards that don't deal adequately with grammar or literature. It is also not enough to make a laundry list of concepts and skills in order to "cover" everything. Strong standards use detail and examples to break down broad categories and concepts and elaborate on the underlying content. They also tend to use smaller grade clusters (e.g., K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-12) or provide separate standards for every grade, which is even more effective.

3) Standards must be firmly rooted in the content of the subject area. This is extremely important. It is not enough for standards to emphasize the skills students should learn and leave the content to local discretion. Whether it is social studies, science, math, or English, a solid education is built on knowledge. Students who don't acquire substantial content knowledge in school will suffer later, both in their personal lives and in their careers. Furthermore, it is impossible to successfully use a skill, say scientific reasoning, without learning some **science** concepts and content. That's why things like the periodic table, laws of gravity and motion, conductivity, and heredity have to be addressed in science standards. Other examples:

- It is inadequate for a **social studies** standard to state that students should be able to "apply knowledge of historical events" without specifying which events and periods of history are most significant *and* clearly defining what is most important about those periods or events for students to understand. We found this to be a big problem in many social studies standards.

- It is inadequate for a **math** standard to state that students should learn to "apply geometric rules and formulas in real world situations." Does this mean students should know how to find the perimeter of a square, the area of a circle, or apply and prove the Pythagorean theorem?

- It is inadequate for an **English** standard to state that students should learn to "read a variety of genres" without specifying *which* genres and giving some examples of works, authors, or literary traditions. It is also important to give more guidance regarding the sophistication and level of complexity of the literature students should be reading.

4) Standards must be clear and explicit about the content all students are expected to learn. It is not good enough to provide details of the content students should learn or the level of performance they should achieve and then claim these are only "models" or "examples" and that other ideas of content or performances are just as acceptable. We've noticed this in some states that have broad standards, such as those referenced in #3 above. To say that the details and content that follow such standards are "just some of the many ways the standard can be reached" should raise some questions and concerns with readers. For example, take the social studies standard mentioned above. The lack of clear and explicit language could mean that learning about Icelandic history is just as important and appropriate as learning about American history. Standards like this will inevitably lead to widely different curricula and expectations in districts and schools across a given state, which leads us to wonder—why develop standards at all?

There is another issue here as well. If the real meat of the standards is included for illustrative purposes only, what will be covered on the state assessments? Either the assessments will follow the lead of the standards and ignore or minimize the content of the subject areas, which would mean that students are not expected to learn any particular content at all, or the assessments will build in specific content knowledge that is not necessarily conveyed in the standards. In the latter case, teachers, students, parents, and others will be left to guess which content is most important. Not only is that counterproductive, it's unfair.

5) Standards that are organized on a course-by-course basis in high school must define which courses all students are expected to take. By the time they graduate, all students should have learned a common core of content in each subject, and that core should be specified in the standards at least part way through high school. A number of states set course-by-course standards in high school. Even though the standards may be very specific about the content of the courses, if they leave it completely up to schools or students which courses should be taken, they are failing to establish a common core. Only those standards documents that make clear *which* courses all students must take—rather than merely requiring a *number* of courses or credits students need to graduate—satisfy our criterion. This does not mean schools and students should be locked into taking these courses in a particular order or in a particular year. But the core-required courses should be clear to all.

Subject-by-Subject Analysis

In preparing this report, we collected the most recent drafts of the core subject area standards in the District of Columbia and all of the states that have them. We examined each document for the qualities described above and we made separate judgments for each subject. *In order for a state to meet the AFT's "common core" criterion, the standards in all four subject areas must meet the requirements discussed earlier. If one or more subjects fail to accomplish these things, the state standards as a whole fail.* (Table 1 in Section II of this report shows which states meet our criterion.)

Because we noticed considerable variation in the quality of the standards from subject to subject in some states, we show how each of the four subject areas measure up to our criterion—we did not include this level of detail in last year's report. Table 2 in Section II of this report shows the subject-by-subject breakdown for each state and compares how many subjects are strong enough to pass our "common core" criterion this year versus last year. In the *State-by-State Analysis* section, we provide more details, including a scale that allows us to provide more information than a simple pass or fail for each subject. The scale and the different categories on that scale are described below.

This graphic appears on each state page in Section IV of this report. It is designed to indicate more precisely than a simple "pass/fail" rating how each subject of a state's standards measures up to the AFT "common core" criterion. It is important to note that this information is new to this year's report. Although we looked at the standards in all four subjects last year, we did not provide this level of detail in our report. We include both 1995 and 1996 data in order to show how the standards in each state have changed over the past year. In some cases, they have gotten stronger; in other cases, they have gotten weaker; and in many cases, they haven't changed.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	◔
MATH	◔	◑
SCIENCE	◕	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	●

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

"Doesn't Meet AFT Common Core Criterion"

We have separated those standards that fail to meet our "common core" criterion into two categories. The category at the bottom of the scale (represented by "○") is reserved for state documents that make no mention at all of grade levels or grade clusters. We think it is important to separate those from the rest because we don't think they should be considered standards. The fact is, they won't be useful to anyone so long as they contain no reference to *when* students should learn the material.

The second category (represented by "◔") denotes all of the standards documents that reference grade levels or clusters, but for one or more of the reasons described earlier, they don't meet the AFT "common core" criterion. These documents either don't provide enough detail, are too light on content, provide only "models" but no explicit standards, or they don't establish a common core in high school. On the state pages, we provide more elaboration on these points as necessary.

"Meets AFT Common Core Criterion"

We have separated standards that meet our "common core" criterion into three categories to show the range of quality. **"Borderline"** cases (represented by "◐") are those documents that meet our criterion, but only by a narrow margin. Last year, recognizing that states were still in the early stages of their work, we decided to err on the side of generosity, giving credit to those state documents that *came close* to providing the right level of information. We understand that states need time to share ideas and to learn from each other in order to produce the best work possible, so we have decided to continue to give credit to these borderline cases this year. Borderline standards are stronger than those that don't meet our criterion, and they deserve to be recognized for this. But if they are going to be powerful levers for raising student achievement, they need to be improved. In future editions of this report, we plan to make tougher judgments, and borderline standards will no longer be satisfactory.

Aside from the borderline cases, the standards documents that meet our criterion (represented by "◕") are, in our view, strong enough to provide the basis for a common core curriculum. They embody the qualities of clarity, content, and precision described earlier, and they should be useful and informative to teachers, parents, and others who will be looking at them. This is not to say that all of these standards are of equal quality—they are not. Some states and some standards documents clearly stand out above the rest, and they deserve to be noted. We refer to these cases as **"exemplary."** These standards are represented by "●" on the scale.

The best models are those states that combine rich content and skills in a grade-by-grade format with precision and efficiency. Why is this the case? In our view, the chances are much better that a strong common core curriculum will result from such standards. And as we discussed earlier, a common core will increase the likelihood that all students are exposed to an *equally rigorous* curriculum; that students who move from school to school will have studied a *consistent* curriculum so they won't be too far behind their new classmates; and that the curriculum, assessments, textbooks, and other elements of the system are *well aligned.*

There are some states that have developed impressive standards without breaking them down grade by grade. We call attention to a few of those cases as well. In each case, these documents are elaborated on in the *State-by-State Analysis* section. In our opinion, every state, even those whose standards presently meet our criterion, should strive to make its standards as clear and effective as the "exemplary" ones we've highlighted.

Issue 3: Are the standards benchmarked to world-class levels?

Much of the discussion about education standards in recent years has focused on the need to bring American students up to "world-class" levels of achievement. As rhetorical as this phrase has become, it is extremely important that we not lose sight of what it means. It doesn't mean making standards a bit more rigorous than they were before. It doesn't mean asking teachers or parents what they think "world-class" performance is. And it doesn't mean basing our standards on the work of national standards-setting organizations who themselves have not adequately defined world-class achievement.

Setting world-class standards should mean making sure American students are asked to meet expectations as demanding as those set for students in other high-achieving countries. It requires placing American standards side by side with standards from other countries whose students are doing well and seeing how we measure up. It requires studying translated curriculum frameworks and exams and student work from a variety of countries to see what students are expected to learn, how well they are expected to learn it, how they are expected to demonstrate that knowledge, and at what age or grade level these expectations are set.

How We Made Our Judgment

We asked state officials whether their standards are benchmarked to world-class levels. We wanted to know if states were really aiming for "world-class" standards by looking at what countries with high-achieving students expect of them in each of the subject areas. For those states that answered "yes," we probed a little deeper to find out what they did. We asked whether they examined translated curriculum materials, standards, or exams from other countries, which is probably the best way to come to terms with what they expect of their students. If they answered "yes," we were curious to find out which countries and which documents they looked at.

In asking this question last year, we discovered that no state had done a thorough job of international benchmarking, which is understandable given the enormity of the task. We decided to give partial credit to the few that had done something substantial in this area. We have done the same thing in this year's report, giving partial credit to states that have studied curriculum documents and exams from other countries in developing their standards. Such states will be denoted as "partially" meeting the international benchmarking criterion in Table 1, and their activities will be referenced in the *State-by-State Analysis* section of the report.

Assessments

Issue: Does or will the state have an assessment system linked to the standards? And if so, will the state assess students in all four core subjects?

One of the most important purposes of setting standards at the state level is to ensure that all students are being offered a challenging curriculum and that they are being judged according to consistently high expectations. Standards that are interpreted differently or that are inconsistently applied from district to district will not serve this function. This is why we stress the importance of standards that are clear and specific.

But even the most specific set of standards can be applied unevenly from district to district if the responsibility for measuring student progress is solely a local one. Why? Because the assessments are what ultimately determine how rigorously a given set of standards is applied. The most rigorous set of standards could be weakened significantly by lax assessments or even tough assessments with very low pass scores. There may even be an incentive for districts to do this so that more of their students "meet the state standards."

In our view, states that take responsibility for developing assessments aligned with their standards will do the best job of monitoring whether those standards are being consistently applied across the state. States that abdicate their responsibility and leave the task of assessment completely up to districts make it much more difficult to ensure consistency.

Moreover, developing a good assessment system is expensive, and most districts do not have the expertise or funds to do this well. It is unfair and unrealistic for states to expect cash-strapped districts to develop their own assessments when they need to be taking a serious look at how best to deploy their resources in helping students reach higher levels of achievement. It is also wasteful. Why should hundreds of districts in a state each have to go through the same exercise and expense of creating their own comprehensive assessment systems?

How We Made Our Judgments

We first asked each state if it has or will have an assessment system measuring whether or not students in all districts are meeting the standards. To receive credit, states must have (or plan to have) assessments that are clearly linked to their standards, and they must assess (or plan to assess) students in every district in the state. Some states may monitor student progress by testing samples of students in each district; others will assess every student. Either approach will satisfy this criterion, but we believe that states that test all students are in a much better position to take the next essential step—making student achievement count. (In future editions of this report, we will only give credit to states that are moving to make individual student achievement count.)

Next, we wanted to find out how many of the states that are planning to measure whether students are meeting the standards will be doing so in all the core subjects. We didn't ask this question directly last year, but judging from what we've learned since then, we think it is a very important issue to raise. Why set standards in all core subjects but only assess students in some of them? The message, whether we like it or not, is that only certain subjects are important enough to measure. There is no better way to diminish the importance of state science standards, for example, than to say progress toward the standards won't be measured. We believe that all core subjects need to be assessed statewide if raising student achievement in these subjects is going to be viewed as the primary goal.

Having said this, we want to make it clear that we understand the costs and complexities involved in developing assessments. We understand the need in some states to begin with a few subjects and phase in assessments in the other subjects over time. That is why we give credit to states that plan to develop assessments in the future. States will only get a "no" on this question in Table 3 if they *do not plan* to develop assessments aligned with their standards in one or more of the core subjects.

Making Standards Count

Extra Help and Incentives for Students

Although they are very important and worth spending time and energy to get right, developing challenging standards and assessments is only the first in a series of steps we need to take to improve the education our children receive. The more important question, and it is one that teachers and other school staff ask repeatedly, is what will happen to students who are not meeting the standards?

We have decided to approach this question from two different angles. First, will there be a system for identifying students who aren't meeting the standards and providing them with the supports and help they need to achieve? And second, will there be incentives for students to work hard and meet the standards? In other words, will promotion from grade to grade or earning a high school diploma be dependent on meeting the state standards? Following are the specific questions we asked of each state:

Issue 1: Does or will the state require and fund extra help for students not meeting the standards?

For high expectations to truly have an impact on achievement, there must be a system in place for detecting which students are struggling to meet the standards and providing them with extra help before they fall too far behind. Extra help or "intervention" could come in a variety of forms, including one-on-one instruction during school hours, after school tutoring, Saturday school, and summer school.

However intervention and remedial programs are structured, a few things are absolutely crucial. **First,** they should be clearly tied to the publicly disseminated standards, so that everyone—including teachers, administrators, students and parents—understands when extra help is warranted. **Second,** the responsibility for detecting when students are falling behind should be shared by the state, districts, schools, and teachers—it is not manageable for teachers alone. That is one of the purposes of developing state assessments based on the standards. In some cases, local and school level assessments can also help fill in the gaps (i.e., grades when the state assessments are not given). **Third,** the responsibility for providing intervention and remedial services should also be a shared one—it cannot rest solely on the shoulders of individual teachers or other school staff. There must be a state-and/or districtwide *system* for providing low-achieving students with the extra resources and attention they need. **Fourth,** this system of diagnosis and intervention must begin in the early grades. Research shows that much of a child's cognitive development takes place at a young age, so waiting until middle school or high school to help low-achievers may be too late.

How We Made Our Judgment

In this year's report, we were interested in finding out which states require that students who aren't meeting the state standards receive extra help. We asked this question of state officials, emphasizing that merely "encouraging" schools and districts to do this isn't enough. We have only given credit to states that both *require* extra help and provide *funds/resources* for districts and schools to carry this out. What we haven't done here is analyze the quality of the intervention programs states and districts have in place. That is a more complicated, though no less important, step that we hope to be able to take in the future.

Issue 2: Does or will the state require districts and schools to make student promotion decisions based in part on state assessment results?

Many teachers encounter intense pressure from parents and administrators not to fail or "hold back" students, whether they have mastered the material for a particular grade or not. Often teachers themselves believe it is unfair to hold students back when students in other classes or schools who have learned less are passed on to the next grade. But promoting students who haven't earned it sends students a terrible message: they can get by (and stay with their friends) without working hard or learning very much. This doesn't hold true in the real world, and most youngsters find that out the hard way.

In order for students to work hard and put maximum effort into meeting high standards, they have to see that achievement counts. Simply putting high standards in front of students won't motivate them to spend more time on their schoolwork. If students understand that meeting the standards is a requirement for being promoted to certain grades and, ultimately, for getting their high school diploma, they will take the standards and assessments much more seriously. Without these types of stakes, many youngsters probably won't pay much attention to higher standards, and the burden for motivating them will fall completely on teachers and other school employees.

How We Made Our Judgment

We asked officials in each state whether districts and schools are or will be required to base student promotion decisions at various grade levels in part on whether or not the state standards have been met. In other words, is promotion to certain grade levels tied in part to state assessment results? As in the previous question, it isn't enough for a state to merely encourage that districts and schools do this. To get credit here, the state must require that meeting the publicly disseminated standards is a prerequisite for student promotion in certain grades.

Issue 3: Does the state have graduation exams or a system of differentiated diplomas linked to the standards?

Another important way to make standards count for students is to tie the high school diploma to achievement of the standards. In last year's report, we asked which states require students to meet high standards in order to graduate. We didn't give credit to states with "minimum competency" exit exams, which we defined as tests that are based on standards below a 10th-grade level. We only gave credit to states that required (or planned to require) students to pass assessments linked to 10th-grade standards or above.

In this year's report, we have once again tried to find out which states have or will have graduation exams tied to 10th-grade standards or above. We have established a 10th-grade minimum standard not to imply that this is the highest standard we should expect students to meet, rather, it is the lowest acceptable standard that students should be held to.

We have also included additional information on graduation requirements this year. In order to give readers a better idea of how challenging states' exit exams are (beyond the question of what level of standards they are linked to), we have tried to collect data on the percentage of students who pass the exams each year. Also, because we feel it is important for youngsters to be competent in all four core subjects, we have asked states whether students will have to pass exams in all subjects or just some subjects in order to graduate.

We have also expanded our scope beyond exit exams this year to give credit for another form of diploma-related incentive: **differentiated diplomas.** We use the term "differentiated diploma" to refer to situations in which standards will be *optional* for students to pursue, but attainment of the standards will be reflected on their diplomas. There are two different ways states are approaching this idea. Some states require students to pass graduation exams *and* offer differentiated diplomas as an additional standard for students to strive for. In other states, the differentiated diploma is the *only* incentive for students to meet the state standards. Although we give credit to states taking either approach, differentiated diplomas are not a substitute for rigorous graduation standards. In our view, the promise of the differentiated diploma idea is that it allows states to set higher standards for students to pursue once they meet the exit standards. The advanced diploma, coupled with high exit standards, should help ensure that all students are challenged and motivated in high school.

Why are some states approaching differentiated diplomas as a subsitute for graduation requirements? Probably because it is easier to maintain high standards that are optional than it is to set high exit standards and require all students to meet them. Setting high mandatory exit standards could lead to an unacceptable rate of failure and retention, which in turn could lead to a lowering of the standards. The fact remains, however, that optional standards won't be enough to motivate all students to work hard and achieve.

There are a number of states that offer advanced diplomas based on the types of courses students take in high school rather than performance on common assessments. For example, some states allow students who take a certain number of advanced courses to obtain a special diploma. This is a useful incentive, but if such diplomas are not tied to a consistently measured standard, they won't be as meaningful to parents, employers, colleges, and others. In this report, we only give credit to states whose differentiated diploma system is directly tied to *both* the state standards and assessments.

II. How the States Measure Up

The following data are based on our state-by-state analysis of the major issues raised in Section I. All of the state-specific data in the tables in this section are further explained in Section IV.

Summary of Major Findings

Standards

1. The commitment to standards-based reform remains very strong in the states

- 48 states are developing common academic standards for their students
- 38 states have developed new or revised standards since last year's report

2. States view the core disciplines as the proper organizing vehicle for academic standards, but vague language and insufficient grounding in content remains a problem

- Of the 48 states developing standards, all but one will have separate standards in each of the core subject areas
- Only 15 states have standards in all four core subjects that are clear, specific, and well-grounded in content

3. More states recognize the need for internationally competitive standards, but few have taken steps in this direction and none have done a thorough job

- Only 12 states have looked at student expectations in other countries while developing their own standards

- The lack of international benchmarking activities in the states is attributable in large part to the dearth of information and resources at the national level

4. Despite the weaknesses of their standards, states do not need to start from scratch

- Most states have strong standards in one or more subjects that could serve as a model for improving their other subjects
- Some state standards are "exemplary" and should be considered models for other states to emulate

5. States are having more difficulty setting strong standards in English and social studies

Assessments

1. All but a few states will develop assessments to measure whether their students are meeting the state standards, but the standards are not strong enough in most states to provide a solid foundation for the assessments

- 42 states either have or are in the process of developing assessments linked to their standards
- Only 34 states will assess student achievement of the standards in all four core subjects
- In most states, the standards are not clear and grounded enough in content to provide a strong foundation for the assessments

Making Standards Count

1. Less than half of the states plan to make their standards "count" for students

- Only 3 states will hold students accountable for meeting the standards prior to high school
- Less than half of the states require or plan to require students to pass high school graduation exams linked to their standards
- Only 9 states will require students to pass graduation exams linked to the standards in all four core subjects

2. Only 10 states require and fund intervention programs to help low-performing students reach the state standards

3. In the states where graduation exams are in use or being planned, there are clear trends toward increased rigor and alignment with state standards

- Whereas only 4 states currently have graduation exams targeted at a 10th-grade proficiency level or higher, 11 additional states plan to set the standards this high in the future
- Whereas only 10 states currently require students to pass graduation exams linked to the state standards, 20 states will make this a requirement in the future

4. Eight states will offer "differentiated diplomas" as a way of motivating students to reach high standards

Major Findings

Standards

1. The commitment to standards-based reform remains very strong in the states

■ 48 states are developing common academic standards for their students

The overwhelming commitment to standards in the states continues to be one of the most important findings in this report. Despite the wrangling going on in Congress and the controversy surrounding some of the standards that have been developed by national organizations, states are deeply committed to the idea that establishing common academic standards for students is the first step toward improving the schools. This is just as true of states with Republican leadership as it is of states with Democrats in charge. *Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia are developing academic standards for their students.* We hope this sends a powerful message about what is most important in education. (Note: last year we reported that 49 states were moving in this direction, but Wyoming has since decided against state standards.)

■ 38 states have developed new or revised standards since last year's report

The tremendous amount of activity we've seen in the states over the past year is another strong indicator of the national commitment to raising academic standards. Over two-thirds of states have developed new or revised standards documents since we issued our report last year. Most of these states (23) have come out with new documents in all four core subjects, while some states have issued new standards in a few subjects. What this demonstrates to us is that most states consider standards a work in progress. They recognize that they may not have gotten things exactly right on the first try and they are committed to continuing their work until their standards are strong enough.

2. States view the core disciplines as the proper organizing vehicle for academic standards, but vague language and insufficient grounding in content remains a problem

■ Of the 48 states developing standards, all but one will have separate standards in each of the core subject areas

In last year's report, we expressed concern that some states were developing standards that moved away from the academic disciplines in favor of broad, cross-disciplinary themes. We noted that without a firm grounding in the traditional disciplines, there is a real danger that standards will fail to capture and convey the important concepts and ways of thinking that have evolved over centuries in the subjects of English, math, science, and social studies. In other words, we were worried that the integrity of the disciplines could be lost. This year, we have noticed a shift back toward the disciplines as an organizing feature of state standards. Of the 48 standards-setting states, Rhode Island is the only one that does not plan to have standards in all four core subjects. Rhode Island will have standards in math, science, and English, but not social studies.

■ Only 15 states have standards in all four core subjects that are clear, specific, and well-grounded in content

Although the commitment to standards is not wavering in the states, most still have serious work to do before their standards will be strong enough to lead to a common core curriculum

Table 1: State Academic Standards

	State has or is developing **academic standards** in:			**Standards are in:**		Standards in all core subjects are **clear and specific enough** to lead to a common core curriculum		Standards are benchmarked to **world-class levels**		
	All Core Subjects	**Some Subjects**	**No Subjects**	**Final Form**	**Draft Form**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Alabama	✓			✓		✓+			✓	
Alaska	✓			✓			✓		✓	
Arizona	✓				✓	✓+				✓
Arkansas	✓				✓		✓			✓
California	✓			✓			✓−			✓
Colorado	✓				✓	✓				✓
Connecticut	✓			✓			✓			✓
Delaware	✓			✓		✓			✓	
DC	✓				✓		✓		✓	
Florida	✓				✓	✓+				✓
Georgia	✓			✓		✓				✓
Hawaii	✓			✓		✓				✓
Idaho	✓				✓	✓+				✓
Illinois	✓				✓		✓			✓
Indiana	✓				✓		✓			✓
Iowa			✓	----------		---------------		---------------		
Kansas	✓				✓		✓			✓
Kentucky	✓				✓		✓			✓
Louisiana	✓				✓		✓			✓
Maine	✓				✓		✓			✓
Maryland	✓				✓		✓		✓	
Massachusetts	✓				✓		✓		✓	
Michigan	✓			✓		✓				✓
Minnesota	✓				✓		✓			✓

Mississippi	✓			✓		✓				✓
Missouri	✓				✓		✓			✓
Montana	✓			✓			✓			✓
Nebraska	✓			✓			✓			✓
Nevada	✓				✓		✓		✓	
New Hampshire	✓			✓		✓			✓	
New Jersey	✓			✓			✓			✓
New Mexico	✓				✓		✓		✓	
New York	✓				✓		✓			✓
North Carolina	✓			✓			✓			✓
North Dakota	✓			✓			✓			✓
Ohio	✓			✓			✓		✓	
Oklahoma	✓			✓			✓			✓
Oregon	✓				✓		✓		✓	
Pennsylvania	✓			✓			✓			✓
Rhode Island		✓			✓		✓		✓	
South Carolina	✓				✓		✓–			✓
South Dakota	✓				✓		✓			✓
Tennessee	✓				✓	✓				✓
Texas	✓				✓	✓				✓
Utah	✓			✓		✓				✓
Vermont	✓				✓		✓			✓
Virginia	✓			✓		✓				✓
Washington	✓				✓		✓			✓
West Virginia	✓				✓		✓			✓
Wisconsin	✓			✓			✓			✓
Wyoming			✓	----------		---------------		---------------		
Totals	48	1	2	21	28	15	34	0	12	37

+ Reflects movement by a state that failed this criterion last year, but passed it this year

– Reflects movement by a state that passed this criterion last year, but failed it this year for all students. Last year, we reported that 13 states had achieved an appropriate level of clarity and depth in terms of the content students should learn in each subject. That number has increased slightly over the past year, but it still remains too low.

The biggest problem with state standards is their inability to define the essential *content* students should learn in each subject. In some states, the standards are simply too broad or vague to be meaningful—example: "students should be able to read for a variety of purposes." In other cases, content is touched upon in some way but not enough elaboration is provided for the standards to be useful—example: "students should be able to identify and classify various geometric figures." Which figures? Classify them according to what properties? Another problem is standards that emphasize skills or processes without adequate grounding in content—example: "students should be able to analyze and interpret historical events." Can interpretation or analysis occur without first learning about a particular period or event in history? Which events are most important for students to learn about?

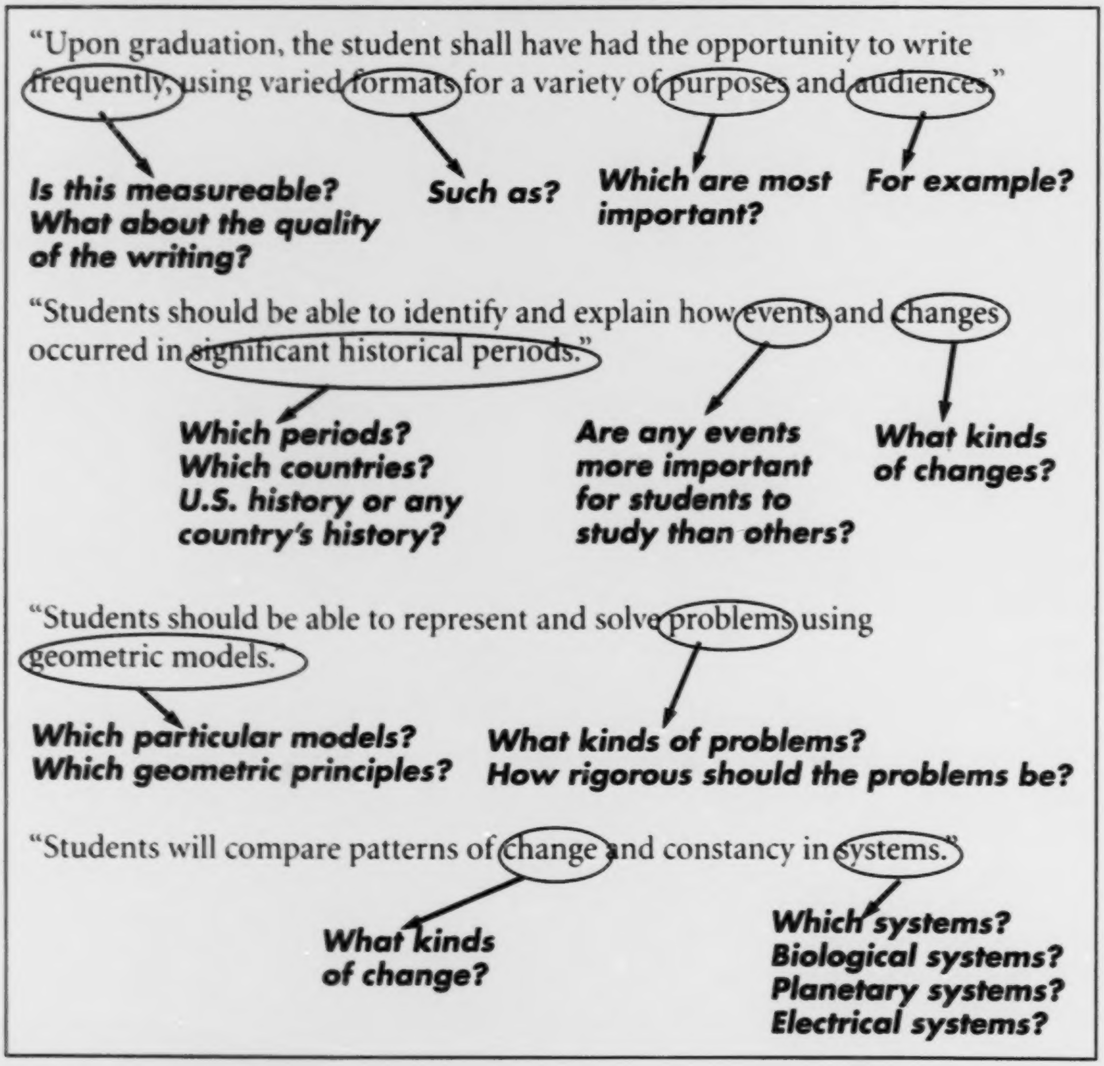
Why is this issue so important? Consider these problems that states will have to contend with if their standards are not clear, specific, and well-grounded in academic content:

Examples of standards that meet and do not meet the AFT "common core" criterion …

	Strong Standards	**Weak Standards**
English	Students should be able to develop a descriptive essay that depicts an object or event, maintains a consistent focus, uses a logical sequence, and elaborates each idea with specific details and vivid vocabulary.	Upon graduation, the student shall have had the opportunity to write frequently, using varied formats for a variety of purposes and audiences.
History	Students should be able to describe how United States federalism was transformed during the Great Depression by the policies of the New Deal and how that transformation continues to affect United States society today.	Students should be able to identify and explain how events and changes occurred in significant historical periods.
Math	The student will differentiate between area and perimeter and identify whether the application of the concept of perimeter or area is appropriate for a given situation.	Students should be able to represent and solve problems using geometric models.
Science	Students should be able to describe the basic processes of photosynthesis and respiration and their importance to life.	Students will compare patterns of change and constancy in systems.

- **Equity**—Vague standards will be interpreted differently across the state, reducing the chance that all students will receive an equally challenging curriculum. Typically, it is disadvantaged students in poorer communities who are the victims of watered-down curricula and low expectations—they will be hurt the most by unclear or vague standards.
- **Mobility**—Significant numbers of students (20% nationwide, 34% in urban areas) change schools or districts each year. Without common standards in place, mobile students arrive at their new school having studied a different curriculum and having learned different materials. This makes it very difficult on both students and teachers. Vague standards will lead to very different curricula across a state, which will do nothing to ease the frustrations associated with student mobility.
- **Guidance & Alignment**—Standards are meant to guide everyone in the system toward common goals. If the language is not explicit or if the content of the subject area is not adequately addressed, the standards won't provide much guidance and they won't be very useful. Vague standards will also reduce the chances that curriculum, assessments, and instructional

...and suggestions for how those standards can be made clearer:



"Upon graduation, the student shall have had the opportunity to write frequently, using varied formats for a variety of purposes and audiences."

Is this measureable? What about the quality of the writing?

Such as?

Which are most important?

For example?

"Students should be able to identify and explain how events and changes occurred in significant historical periods."

Which periods? Which countries? U.S. history or any country's history?

Are any events more important for students to study than others?

What kinds of changes?

"Students should be able to represent and solve problems using geometric models."

Which particular models? Which geometric principles?

What kinds of problems? How rigorous should the problems be?

"Students will compare patterns of change and constancy in systems."

What kinds of change?

Which systems? Biological systems? Planetary systems? Electrical systems?

materials are well aligned.

- **Public Support**—Polls show that the public supports higher academic standards, but some states have run into problems when their standards were not clear enough for parents and the public to understand. Vague standards can lead to confusion, suspicion, and opposition to reforms. The more standards are left open to interpretation, the better the chance they will be misinterpreted.

3. More states recognize the need for internationally competitive standards, but few have taken steps in this direction and none has done a thorough job

■ Only 12 states have looked at student expectations in other countries while developing their own

When we asked states last year whether they had taken steps to ensure their standards were comparable to those in other nations, only 7 could point to instances where such benchmarking had taken place. What we were looking for was evidence that standards documents from other countries had been consulted. Referencing the work of national organizations who themselves have not benchmarked their standards internationally was not good enough. This year, the number of states that have done international benchmarking work has increased to 12. What this means is that 12 states have actually looked at standards, curriculum materials, exams, or student work from other countries when developing their standards. It does not mean that those states have done this in all subjects; on the contrary, most have only managed to acquire translated documents in one or two subjects. Nor does it mean that the countries these states have looked at are the ones with the highest standards. In most cases, states have worked with anything they could get their hands on, which very often means documents from English-speaking countries that require no translation.

■ The lack of international benchmarking activities in the states is attributable in large part to the dearth of information and resources at the national level

Comparing state standards to the best in the world is hard work. It requires having access to translated materials from foreign countries, and it requires a certain level of knowledge and expertise about those foreign education systems in order to understand the functions the standards serve. This is clearly an area where every state shouldn't be expected to re-create the wheel. It is simply unreasonable to assume that every state will translate its own materials and hire its own experts. Yet that's exactly what they are being asked to do. Without a sustainable national effort to provide states with access to translated materials and benchmarking information from other countries, we cannot expect states to develop world-class standards.

4. Despite the weaknesses of their standards, states do not need to start from scratch

■ Most states have strong standards in one or more subjects that could serve as a model for improving their other subjects

While they may not have strong standards in all subjects, 34 states have standards in one or more subjects that are strong enough to meet the AFT "common core" criterion. That is very good news. Rather than having to start from scratch or search for answers in other states, these states can learn from their own successes. We suggest they try to bring those standards that don't meet our criterion up to the level of clarity and detail in the subjects that do.

■ Some state standards are "exemplary" and should be considered models for other states to emulate

As we analyzed the standards documents from all of the states, some clearly stood out above the rest. The standards we have listed as "exemplary" are all written in clear, explicit language, they are firmly rooted in the content of the subject area, and they are detailed enough to provide significant guidance to teachers, curriculum and assessment developers, parents, students, and others who will be using them.

The chart below shows which state standards we consider "exemplary." We have called attention to two different models of standards: those that are defined grade by grade and those that are organized into grade clusters. Although all of the ones we list here are noteworthy, the grade-by-grade standards will, by their very nature, provide more guidance to teachers and others. Anyone picking up these documents, whether it be a 2nd-grade teacher, a parent of a 7th grader, or an 11th-grade student, will know what is expected at that particular time in the student's career. That is not the case with standards that are organized in clusters, no matter how strong they are. Grade-by-grade standards will also do a better job of easing the transition from school to school for mobile students.

EXEMPLARY STANDARDS

Subject Area	Exemplary Grade-by-Grade Standards	Exemplary Clustered Standards
English	Virginia	None
Math	Indiana Ohio Virginia West Virginia	Florida
Science	Virginia	Delaware Massachusetts
Social Studies	California Virginia	District of Columbia Florida

5. States are having more difficulty setting strong standards in English and social studies

Our subject-by-subject analysis reveals that math and science standards in most states are clearer and more thoroughly grounded in content than English and social studies standards. As Table 2 shows, 33 states have developed science standards that meet our "common core" criterion and 30 states have done so in math, but only 22 states have developed English standards that we feel are strong enough to lead to a common core curriculum and significant reforms in the schools, and only 20 have done so in social studies.

The overall weakness of the social studies and English standards is probably due in part to the controversy surrounding both of the efforts to develop "national" standards in these subjects. The national history standards (developed by the National Center for History in the Schools) are cited as references more often than the English standards released by the National Council of Teachers of English. This is partly due to the fact that the English standards haven't been around as long, but it also has to do with the fact that the English standards are not really standards. They provide no grade-level benchmarks at all, and as a result, they are not much use to states or anyone else developing standards. The math and science standards developed by the respective national organizations (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and National Research Council) are cited more often than those in the humanities, and the consistency in state documents is more noticeable in these subjects.

The problem with the English and social studies standards in most states is that skills or

Table 2: Subject-by-Subject Standards Analysis

Are the Most Current Drafts of Each State's Standards Clear and Specific Enough to Meet the AFT's "Common Core" Criterion?

	Number of Subjects Meeting AFT Criterion		English		Math		Science		Social Studies	
	Last Year (1995)	**This Year (1996)**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Alabama	3	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Alaska	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Arizona	1	4	✓[1]		✓[1]		✓[1]		✓[1]	
Arkansas	1	1		✓		✓	✓[1]			✓
California	4	3		✓	✓[1]		✓		✓	
Colorado	4	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Connecticut	2	2		✓	✓		✓			✓
Delaware	4	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
DC	0	3	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Florida	0	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Georgia	4	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Hawaii	4	4	✓[1]		✓		✓		✓[1]	
Idaho	0	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Illinois	0	3	✓[1]		✓		✓[1]			✓
Indiana	1	3		✓	✓		✓[1]		✓	
Iowa	No Standards		--------------		--------------		--------------		--------------	
Kansas	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Kentucky	0	2		✓	✓[1]		✓			✓
Louisiana	3	2		✓		✓	✓		✓	
Maine	0	1		✓		✓	✓			✓
Maryland	0	1		✓	✓			✓		✓
Massachusetts	1	2		✓	✓[1]		✓			✓
Michigan	4	4	✓[1]		✓[1]		✓		✓[1]	
Minnesota	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Mississippi	4	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Missouri	0	3	✓[1]		✓[1]		✓			✓

Montana	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Nebraska	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Nevada	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
New Hampshire	4	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
New Jersey	1	1		✓		✓	✓			✓
New Mexico	0	2		✓	✓[1]		✓			✓
New York	0	3	✓[1]		✓[1]		✓			✓
North Carolina	1	1		✓	✓			✓		✓
North Dakota	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Ohio	2	2	✓		✓			✓		✓
Oklahoma	2	2	✓		✓			✓		✓
Oregon	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Pennsylvania	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Rhode Island	0	1		✓		✓	✓[1]		Not Developing	
South Carolina	1	2		✓	✓		✓		N/A	
South Dakota	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Tennessee	4	4	✓[1]		✓		✓		✓	
Texas	4	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Utah	4	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Vermont	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Virginia	3	4	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Washington	0	2	✓			✓	✓			✓
West Virginia	3	3		✓	✓		✓[1]		✓[1]	
Wisconsin	0	0		✓		✓		✓		✓
Wyoming	No Standards		--------------		--------------		--------------		--------------	
Totals			22	27	30	19	33	16	20	27

[1] Document is considered a "borderline" case that will need to be improved in the future (see p. 6)

processes are emphasized over content. This is most noticeable in social studies, where many state standards pay too little attention to the actual historical content students are expected to learn. In some cases, periods of history are simply listed, with no elaboration as to which themes, events, or issues are most important for students to study within each period. In other cases, history is treated more as a skill to be developed (e.g., "historical inquiry") than knowledge to be acquired. The result is that students can meet many state social studies standards regardless of what they learn about history. This is particularly troubling in light of the recent National Assessment of Educational Progress results in history, which showed that an alarmingly low percentage of students exhibit "competence over challenging subject matter." Only 17 percent of 4th graders, 14 percent of 8th graders, and 11 percent of 12th graders are considered "proficient" in history.

A similar problem exists in state English standards. Some standards pay more attention to the process of writing than to the quality of students' written work. And it is rare to see reading or literature standards that reference particular authors, works of literature, literary traditions, or periods, yet without such references, it is very difficult to convey the complexity and styles of the works students should be exposed to.

Assessments

1. All but a few states will develop assessments to measure whether their students are meeting the state standards, but the standards are not strong enough in most states to provide a solid foundation for the assessments

■ **42 states either have or are in the process of developing assessments linked to their standards**

Although it seems like common sense to most people outside of education circles, the connection among standards, curriculum, and assessments has not been clearly made in our schools. In the past, many states have relied on commercially developed standardized tests to measure and report how well their students were doing. As states have moved to develop their own standards, it has become clear to most that those standardized tests are not well aligned with the content in their standards and that new assessments will have to be developed to provide reliable information about student achievement. Most states are still very early in the assessment process and there are many hurdles to clear along the way, but the very fact that so many of them intend to make a strong connection between standards and assessments (see Table 3) is something that deserves recognition.

■ **Only 34 states will assess student achievement of the standards in all four core subjects**

Although most states will develop assessments linked to their standards in all four subjects, a significant number (8) will only assess students in some of those subjects. Of these eight states, all will link their standards and assessments in math and English, some will also do so in science, and none will assess in social studies. This prioritizing may be due to federal requirements in the new Title I law, which most states rely on for funding. Title I requires states to develop standards in the four core subjects but only requires assessments in English and math. Nevertheless, when certain subjects are assessed and others are not, the clear message sent to students, teachers, and parents is that some subjects are not as important as others. This is clearly the message some states are sending about social studies and, to a lesser extent, science. (We understand the need in some states to start with certain subjects and phase in the others over time—that is why we give credit to states for simply *planning* on developing assessments in the future.)

■ In most states, the standards are not clear and grounded enough in content to provide a strong foundation for the assessments

This is a very important point that deserves serious attention before states get too far along in the assessment development process. Of the 42 states developing assessments linked to their standards, only 15 will be basing their assessments on standards that we feel are clear and thoroughly grounded in academic content (see Table 3). In 27 states, the standards in one or more subjects are not strong enough to support rigorous, content-based assessments. Without a strong foundation, the assessments, teaching, and learning will suffer.

Why is this the case? States whose standards don't sufficiently address the content of the subject areas may end up with assessments that don't require students to have a firm enough grasp of those subjects. In other words, the assessments may not test what students know about biology or history or literature. Instead, they may focus on whether students can apply scientific reasoning skills or understand the concept of change in history, without requiring any particular knowledge of historical events or scientific concepts. Or, alternatively, if states with vague standards develop assessments that *do* get more specific about the content students should learn in each subject area, teachers, students, and others who look to the standards for guidance will be left to guess what will be covered on the assessments. It is unfair and completely unproductive to be obscure in the standards and then hone in on specific content in the assessments.

Making Standards Count

Extra Help and Incentives for Students

Motivating students to work hard in school is a major challenge that teachers and other school staff (not to mention parents) face day after day. Students are constantly asking questions like "why do we have to learn this?" and "does this test count?" If higher standards and new assessments are going to make a difference in our schools, the results have to "count." Simply putting a higher standard in front of students, without giving them tangible reasons to strive for it, is an exercise in futility. And it will have a crushing effect on teachers and schools if they are held accountable for students' failure but are given no support or leverage in motivating them to achieve. Students who are not meeting state standards should not be passed from grade to grade and they shouldn't be handed a high school diploma. Instead, schools should provide struggling students with substantial extra help and they shouldn't be promoted or given a diploma until they have met the standards. As our findings below indicate, these issues continue to get too little attention in the states.

1. Less than half of the states plan to make their standards "count" for students

■ Only 3 states will hold students accountable for meeting the standards prior to high school

Polls clearly show that parents and the public want to see an end to social promotion, the practice of passing students from grade to grade regardless of whether they have learned the material and met clear standards. Social promotion sends the wrong message about hard work, and it is one of the more deceptive and damaging things we can do to children. Sooner or later, whether they are struggling to catch up and graduate from high school, whether they are looking for a well-paying job after high school, or whether they are trying to get into college without spending money on remedial courses, youngsters will find out that failing to learn has consequences. In spite of all of this, only three states require or plan to require districts and schools to use the state standards and assessments as a factor in determining whether students should

Table 3: State Assessments

	State has or will have a state assessment system linked to the standards in:			The state assessment system is or will be based on standards that:	
	All Subjects	Some Subjects	No Subjects	Meet AFT Criteria	Fail AFT Criteria
Alabama		✓		✓	
Alaska	✓				✓
Arizona		✓		✓	
Arkansas	✓				✓
California	✓				✓
Colorado	✓			✓	
Connecticut			✓	N/A	
Delaware	✓			✓	
DC	✓				✓
Florida		✓		✓	
Georgia	✓			✓	
Hawaii	✓			✓	
Idaho		✓		✓	
Illinois	✓				✓
Indiana		✓			✓
Iowa	No State Assessments			--------------------	
Kansas	✓				✓
Kentucky	✓				✓
Louisiana			✓	N/A	
Maine	✓				✓
Maryland	✓				✓
Massachusetts	✓				✓
Michigan	✓			✓	
Minnesota	✓				✓
Mississippi	✓			✓	
Missouri	✓				✓
Montana			✓	N/A	

Nebraska	No State Assessments			--------------------	
Nevada		✓			✓
New Hampshire	✓			✓	
New Jersey	✓				✓
New Mexico	✓				✓
New York	✓				✓
North Carolina	✓				✓
North Dakota			✓	N/A	
Ohio	✓				✓
Oklahoma	✓				✓
Oregon	✓				✓
Pennsylvania	✓				✓
Rhode Island		✓			✓
South Carolina		✓			✓
South Dakota			✓	N/A	
Tennessee	✓			✓	
Texas	✓			✓	
Utah	✓			✓	
Vermont			✓	N/A	
Virginia	✓			✓	
Washington	✓				✓
West Virginia	✓				✓
Wisconsin	✓				✓
Wyoming	No State Assessments			--------------------	
Totals	34	8	6	15	27

be promoted into certain grades.

■ Less than half of the states require or plan to require students to pass high school graduation exams linked to their standards

Although graduation exams are the most common way for states to hold students accountable for learning, the majority of states do not plan to tie the high school diploma to achievement of their standards. Ten states currently require their students to pass high school exit exams linked to the standards, and ten more plan to do so in the future. The other 30 states have no plans to link their standards to graduation. In fact, most of those 30 states have no plans for tying any student incentives to their standards.

■ Only 9 states will require students to pass graduation exams linked to the standards in all four core subjects

Of the 20 states that will have graduation exams *linked to their standards*, less than half will require students to meet the standards in all four core subjects. All 20 states will require students to pass math and English exams, but science and social studies are not as much of a priority. We raised this same problem earlier in the assessment section, where a number of states seem to be relegating social studies and science to a lower priority, and we are concerned that these states may be sending the message that these subjects are not important.

2. Only 10 states require and fund intervention programs to help low-performing students reach the state standards

In order to help *all* students reach high standards, schools need to determine which students are having trouble with the standards, and they need to be given extra attention and help. Whether it is after school tutoring, Saturday school or some other type of program, the system must provide targeted services to low-achieving students, and this must begin early in their educational careers. Only 10 states require and fund such services. Eight additional states require intervention but provide no resources for districts and schools to carry it out. There is no reason why every state shouldn't require that low-achieving students are given extra help.

3. In the states where graduation exams are in use or being planned, there are clear trends toward increased rigor and alignment with state standards (see Table 5)

■ Whereas only 4 states currently have graduation exams targeted at a 10th-grade proficiency level or higher, 11 additional states plan to set the standards this high in the future

Although 17 states currently require students to pass high school graduation exams, most use "minimum competency" tests, which measure 7th-, 8th-, or 9th-grade knowledge and skills. According to most state officials, that will change in the future. In addition to the 4 states with exit exams currently pegged to a 10th-grade proficiency level or above, 11 more states say they will be raising the standards for their graduation exams. This is good news because it represents such a change from current practice. But the overall number of states that will have high-level graduation exams is still very low.

■ Whereas only 10 states currently require students to pass graduation exams linked to the state standards, 20 states plan to make this a requirement in the future

The other piece of good news about graduation exams is the extent to which they are becoming more closely aligned with the standards and curricula in the states. Although most states' exit exams are not currently linked to their standards, all but three recognize the importance of making that connection in the future. Without a clear link between standards and assessments, students, teachers, and parents will have no way of planning for what will be covered on the tests. It also calls into question the purpose of having the standards if students will not be required to meet them.

4. Eight states will offer "differentiated diplomas" as a way of motivating students to reach high standards

One of the political realities states face when using high school exit exams as the sole incentive for students is that setting that standard too high could lead to an unacceptable rate of failure. In an era when graduation rates—as opposed to what graduates know and are able to do—are one of the most recognized and prized indicators of school success, states are understandably hesitant to raise the bar too high. As mentioned earlier, some states are taking this step with their exit exams in spite of the political pressures, and hopefully they will be able to sustain a much higher graduation standard. But other states are taking a different approach. They are raising the bar and offering special recognition to those students who meet the standards.

The New York *Regents* and California *Golden State* exams are two of the better-known examples of differentiated diploma systems. Students who take these exams and score high enough earn a special diploma recognized across the state. But these represent an *advanced* form of diploma that is purely optional for students to pursue. Making them optional has probably helped New York and California keep the standards for these exams high. New York is in the process of phasing in the *Regents* courses and exams as a graduation requirement for *all* students. People around the country will be watching to see whether the state can do this while maintaining the traditionally high *Regents* standard. (See the New York page in the *State-by-State Analysis* section for more detail.)

Employers and colleges hold the key to making differentiated diploma systems work because they are the ones with the power to make the special diploma pay off for students. If employers make it clear that they will give special preference in hiring to students with the advanced diploma, students will be motivated to work hard and earn that diploma. If colleges make the advanced diploma an admission requirement or offer scholarships to students who earn it, more students will make earning that diploma a goal. But if none of these external incentives are put in place, there is much less chance that differentiated diplomas will have an impact on student achievement.

Making Standards Count for College Admissions

College is a dream that should always be open to youngsters in this country who work hard and achieve. But right now, too many "college-bound" students end up in remedial courses paying tuition for the knowledge and skills they should have learned in high school. Although in this report we focus on ways states can make their academic standards count for students while in the K-12 system, the manner in which those standards are treated by colleges (and employers) will have an immeasurable effect on how seriously they are taken by students.

We did not specifically ask states whether achievement of the high school standards would become a requirement for entry into higher education, but we learned of two states where this may become a reality. **Maryland** and **Oregon** are both committed to aligning the admissions standards at state four-year universities with the standards students are expected to meet in high school. The hope is that this will lead to higher student achievement in high school and better prepared college freshmen.

In Maryland, the state is developing end-of-course exams in the core academic subjects that students will have to pass to graduate from high school. If all goes as planned, students will have to earn even higher scores on those exams to gain admission to state colleges and universities. In Oregon, the state higher education system has made it a priority to develop performance-based admissions standards that are linked to the K-12 standards. The result will be a separate set of publicly-available standards that students will have to meet to enter state universities. *For more information, see the write-ups on these states in Section IV.*

Table 4: Consequences for Student Achievement Linked to the Standards

	State requires or will require **Intervention/ Remediation** for students not meeting the standards[1]		State requires or will require districts to make **Student Promotion** decisions based in part on state assessment results		State has or will have **Graduation Exams** based on 10th grade standards or above[2]		State has or will have a system of **Differentiated Diplomas** linked to the standards	
	Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Alabama		✓[5]		✓		✓[6]		✓
Alaska		✓		✓		✓		✓
Arizona		✓		✓	✓			✓
Arkansas		✓[5]		✓[3]	✓			✓
California		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Colorado		✓		✓		✓		✓
Connecticut		✓		✓		✓		✓[3]
Delaware		✓		✓		✓		✓
DC	✓		✓			✓		✓
Florida		✓[5]		✓	✓			✓
Georgia		✓[4]		✓	✓			✓
Hawaii		✓		✓		✓[3]		✓
Idaho		✓		✓		✓		✓
Illinois		✓		✓		✓		✓
Indiana	✓			✓	✓			✓
Iowa		✓		✓		✓		✓
Kansas		✓		✓		✓		✓
Kentucky	✓			✓		✓		✓
Louisiana		✓[3]		✓[3]		✓[3]		✓
Maine		✓		✓		✓		✓
Maryland		✓		✓	✓			✓
Massachusetts	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Michigan		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Minnesota		✓		✓		✓[6]		✓

Mississippi		✓		✓	✓			✓
Missouri		✓		✓		✓		✓
Montana		✓		✓		✓		✓
Nebraska		✓		✓		✓		✓
Nevada		✓[5]		✓	✓			✓
New Hampshire		✓		✓		✓		✓
New Jersey		✓		✓	✓			✓
New Mexico		✓		✓		✓[3]		✓
New York	✓			✓	✓		✓	
North Carolina	✓		✓			✓[6]		✓
North Dakota		✓		✓		✓		✓
Ohio	✓			✓		✓[6]	✓	
Oklahoma		✓[5]		✓		✓		✓
Oregon		✓[5]		✓		✓	✓	
Pennsylvania		✓		✓		✓		✓
Rhode Island		✓		✓		✓	✓	
South Carolina	✓		✓		✓			✓
South Dakota		✓		✓		✓		✓
Tennessee		✓		✓		✓[6]		✓
Texas	✓			✓		✓[6]		✓
Utah		✓		✓		✓		✓
Vermont		✓		✓		✓		✓
Virginia	✓			✓		✓		✓
Washington		✓		✓	✓			✓
West Virginia		✓[5]		✓		✓	✓	
Wisconsin		✓[5]		✓		✓		✓
Wyoming		✓		✓		✓		✓
Totals	10	41	3	48	13	38	8	43

[1] - In order to receive a "yes," the state must provide funding for the intervention/remediation programs

[2] - For further details on exit exams, see Table 5

[3] - There is or will be a consequence for achievement, but it is/will not be based on the state standards

[4] - State has a program, but it is not mandated

[5] - State mandated, but no special funding provided

[6] - The exit exam that is linked to the standards is a minimum competency exam

Table 5: States That Have or Will Have High School Graduation Exams

	The state's graduation exams are **currently linked** to the standards in:			Which grade level proficiency are the **current graduation exams** targeted to?		**Pass Rates** for the Class of 1995 [1]		The state **is developing** graduation exams which will be linked to the standards in:			Which grade level proficiency will the **new graduation exams** be targeted to?	
	All Four Subjects	**Some Subjects**	**No Subjects**	**Below 10th grade**	**10th grade or above**	**First Attempt**	**Final Attempt**	**All Four Subjects**	**Some Subjects**	**No Subjects**	**Below 10th grade**	**10th grade or above**
Alabama		✓		✓		82%		N/A			N/A	
Arizona	N/A			N/A		N/A			✓			✓
Arkansas	N/A			N/A		N/A			✓			✓
Florida			✓	✓		83%			✓			✓
Georgia		✓			✓		83% [2]	✓				✓
Hawaii			✓		✓			N/A			N/A	
Indiana	N/A			N/A		N/A			✓			✓
Louisiana	✓				✓	85%	98%	N/A			N/A	
Maryland			✓	✓			98%	✓				✓
Massachusetts	N/A			N/A		N/A		✓				✓
Minnesota	N/A			N/A		N/A		✓			✓	
Mississippi		✓		✓		93%			✓			✓
Nevada		✓		✓		85%	96%		✓			✓
New Jersey			✓		✓	73%	96%	✓				✓
New Mexico			✓	✓		85%		N/A			N/A	
New York	✓			✓			98%	✓				✓
North Carolina		✓		✓		87%	98%	N/A			N/A	
Ohio	✓			✓			98%	N/A			N/A	
South Carolina			✓	✓					✓			✓
Tennessee		✓		✓		70%		N/A			N/A	
Texas		✓		✓		54%	91%	N/A			N/A	
Virginia			✓	✓		66%		N/A			N/A	
Washington	N/A			N/A		N/A		✓				✓
Totals	3	7	7	13	4			7	7	0	1	13

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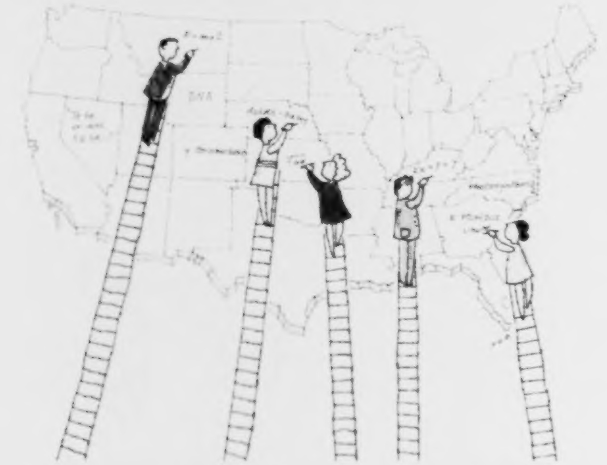
[1] In cases where data was not available, we have left the column blank

[2] Since pass rate is available on a per subject basis only, this figure represents an average of the percentages

III. Recommendations for Moving Forward



When it comes to improving America's schools, there is never a shortage of ideas from within the field or from outside "experts." The proposals come in all shapes and sizes and focus on a wide variety of issues. Of those that are adopted, most programs are short-lived, either because they aren't producing results, or someone new comes along with his or her own ideas of how to reform the schools.

This vicious circle of school reform, where programs and ideas come and go with dispatch, is well known to teachers and others in the system, and it is why they are naturally skeptical about efforts to set standards. They believe their students are capable of learning more, and they agree that expectations should be higher, but they don't necessarily have full confidence that the standards will be strong enough and that states and districts will provide the resources and supports they need to help their students achieve those standards. Parents and the public also support higher academic standards, but they too have questioned some of what they have seen developed in states.

We are convinced that educators and the public will support standards-based reform in any state if the standards are strong and the case for standards is made intelligently. We are just as certain that support will diminish if the standards are vague, non-academic, or otherwise unclear, or if there are no rewards or consequences attached to the standards. What follows are some ideas we hope readers will take away from this report to help ensure that standards-based reform succeeds. They are ambitious to be sure, but ambition is what is needed—tinkering around the edges is simply not enough.

1. States need to be supported in their efforts to raise standards

Setting academic standards for students that are clear, rigorous, and strong enough to drive changes in our education system is hard work. It will take a sustained effort for states to come up with the right combination of strong standards, aligned assessments, and incentives for students and families. It took other countries with successful education systems years, and even decades, to put all of the pieces together into a coherent standards-driven system. It is not reasonable to expect states to get it right on the first try.

With 48 states and the District of Columbia working on raising the academic expectations for their students, it is very important that education organizations, business groups, policymakers, and the public stand firm in support of these efforts.

This is not to say that the work states are producing shouldn't be viewed critically. On the contrary, states need constructive criticism in order to make the right changes. They need to be urged to revise something for the second, third, or fourth time until it is right. They need to be encouraged to attach real consequences to the standards if those standards are going to have a significant effect on student achievement. But unless everyone with a stake in public education comes together to support these efforts, we fear the demise of standards-driven reform and the further deterioration of America's public education system.

2. States need help to make sure their standards are rigorous and internationally competitive

As we stress throughout this report, we have analyzed state standards based on certain important criteria but not all important criteria. We report which states have standards that are clear, specific, and well grounded in content, but we do not judge how rigorous they are. Doing this right would entail a comparative analysis based on translated standards, curriculum materials, and exams from other states and other countries. The resources and the technology for doing this are simply not available right now in this country, and they won't be unless there is a concerted national effort to make it happen.

The good news is that most governors, business, and education leaders agree that making sure our standards are internationally competitive is very important. This was a major point of discussion at the National Education Summit in March. In fact, one concrete result of the Summit may be that resources are pulled together to help states benchmark their standards. If this is done properly, it would be a major step forward for the standards movement.

We believe this must be done seriously through the creation of a national conversation led and provoked by a non-profit institution or entity that would translate materials from overseas, collect data, engage in international benchmarking, and offer states consultation and evaluation of their standards and assessments. At the very least, such an entity should be able to pull together and translate standards, curriculum materials, exams, and student work samples from high-achieving foreign countries and from states and communities in the U.S. If states and others developing standards and assessments had access to these materials, it would be a huge step forward. But states will also need help analyzing the quality and rigor of their work and comparing it to that of other states and countries. This is not something they can do on their own, and it is risky for them to move too far ahead on their reforms without knowing how their standards compare.

3. States should look to other state standards as a guide

When it comes to developing quality academic standards, it is our opinion that states need to spend more time looking not only at what other countries do, but also at each other's work. Most states reference one or more of the national standards projects in their standards, but very few show evidence of having looked at the best that their colleagues in other states have to offer. Why is this important? The most obvious reason is that every state shouldn't be expected to re-invent the wheel. If Delaware has spent time and resources putting together an excellent set of science standards, why shouldn't other states look to those standards for guidance? In fact, why shouldn't they borrow from them liberally?

The other reason state standards are a useful resource has to do with their practicality and feasibility. Although some of the national standards documents provide very clear and thorough descriptions of the content and skills students should learn, they were not designed for states to adopt in their entirety. Each of the groups that put these standards together was primarily concerned with its own subject area, and little thought was given to how all of the standards in all of the subjects would fit together. Most agree that there is too much in the standards as a combined whole to be reasonably covered by teachers and students. (The exception here is the English standards produced by the National Council of Teachers of English, where the dearth of content and other information makes them virtually unusable.) Therefore, states have been forced to pick and choose how much of what's in the national standards to include in their own. It follows, then, that states would find more reasonable and manageable models of standards in other states that have already done the hard work of paring down the national standards.

4. States should supplement their standards with curriculum frameworks that provide clearer guidance to districts and schools without sacrificing local control

When we encourage states to make their standards more specific, some respond that they do not want to interfere with local control of the curriculum. In our opinion, most states could make their standards clearer and more specific and still leave plenty of room for local flexibility. We think it is unfair to create broad standards that don't communicate the specific content and skills students will be required to learn, but then to test specific knowledge and skills on the state assessments. Why not be up front with teachers, parents, and students?

In any event, we do recognize the tension that states face and we want to put forward one way of dealing with it. States that want to keep their standards focused on certain grade levels rather than make them grade by grade should create curriculum guides or frameworks that illustrate how a grade-by-grade curriculum could be organized around the standards. These frameworks need not be state mandated, but they must be tied to the standards and assessments. Districts that don't want to use the frameworks shouldn't have to, but it should be clear to everyone, including teachers and parents, that the frameworks represent the state's best ideas for how local curricula could be designed to help students meet the standards.

5. States need to make sure their assessments are based on strong standards

As we've pointed out in this report two years in a row, most states need to make their standards clearer and more specific in one or more subjects. As time passes and states move forward with the development of their assessments, this point takes on an even more urgent nature. Right now, 27 states are planning to develop assessments based on standards that we don't feel are strong enough. This will either lead to assessments that don't require students to know any content, which would be a major step backward, or the assessments will build in content knowledge but that knowledge will not be reflected in the standards. The result will be that teachers and students will have to guess what's most important.

While we do not want to imply in this report that states should stop working on their assessments until the standards are exactly right, we do feel strongly that the assessments should require students to demonstrate significant content knowledge in each subject, and that the content must be thoroughly reflected in the standards. States will be setting their teachers, schools, and students up for a big fall if this does not happen.

6. States should establish plans for phasing in consequences

Most states do not plan on creating incentives and consequences for students to work hard and strive for challenging academic standards. For two years now, this has been one of our most disturbing findings. There are many ways for states to make standards "count" for students. State standards can be used to guide promotion decisions throughout a student's school career. The standards can be put in place as graduation requirements, which seems to be the most common course of action for states. Achievement of the standards can be the basis for special recognition or scholarships. Or standards can be used by colleges and employers to help guide their admissions and hiring practices. However this is done, the AFT firmly believes that without student incentives, higher standards won't be achievable. And polls show that the public agrees.

Some states respond that it is too early in the process for them to put high stakes in place. We understand and appreciate the problems that will arise if consequences are instituted too quickly. It isn't fair to hold students or others accountable for meeting standards until those standards have been introduced into the schools and have had a chance to sink in. That's why we give credit in this report to states that plan to make their standards count in the future. Unfortunately, half of the states don't have any plans at all.

We feel very strongly that every state that is developing standards should also be phasing-in student incentives and consequences in the future. Schools, teachers, parents, and students will be much better off if they can see what is coming years down the road and begin to plan ahead. They are also apt to take the standards and assessments much more seriously if they know these things will count in the future.

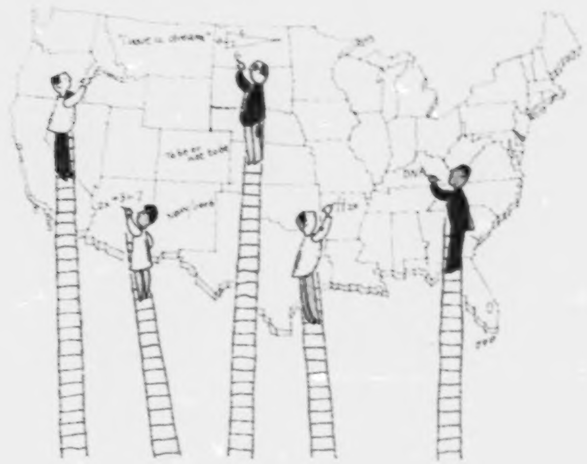
7. States must provide extra help to students who are not meeting the standards

When the AFT talks about making standards "count" for students, we mean more than the granting or witholding of diplomas or promotions. These things are very important, but just as important and fundamental to helping raise student achievement is the process of identifying which students are having trouble meeting the standards and providing them with extra help. This should be a shared state and local responsibility. Unfortunately, very few states seem to be including this in their reform agendas.

If state standards are going to drive real changes in the schools, this issue needs to be taken more seriously. Along with state standards should come a requirement that districts provide targeted intervention programs for low-achieving students. And states must share in the costs of providing these services.

There are many forms extra help can take—after school programs, one-on-one tutoring, Saturday school, summer school—and states need not dictate exactly *how* it is done. But states should make sure that extra help is provided to every student who needs it, and this process should begin in the early grades, before children can fall too far behind. In order to ensure that assistance is provided consistently across the state, states should insist that student performance relative to the state standards and assessments is one criterion used to identify students needing extra help.

IV. State-by-State Analysis



The information in this section is meant to elaborate on the information in the tables in Section II. The tables show how each state fared against the AFT criteria. These state pages are designed to explain why.

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Alabama

Standards: In our 1995 report, we reviewed the *Alabama Course of Study* documents in the core academic subjects. This year, we reviewed the revised science *Course of Study.*

All of Alabama's documents provide grade-by-grade standards from K-8. English and social studies continue grade by grade through high school, while science and math are course by course. Last year, Alabama's standards documents met our "common core" criterion in all subjects except in science. Science was very clear and detailed in its content coverage, but it failed to specify which particular courses all students must take in its course-by-course high school standards. The new science *Course of Study* is just as strong in terms of clarity and content, and it solves the problem of the high school core curriculum by clearly specifying which courses all students must take. This means that all four subjects meet our criterion.

With respect to international benchmarking, state officials reported that the developers of Alabama's English standards examined New Zealand's curriculum.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◔	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕

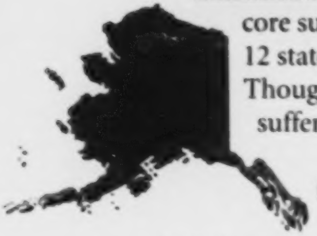
Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Alabama uses both commercial and state-developed assessments. The state-developed assessments are aligned with the standards in English and math and given to all students in grades 3, 6, and 9. There are no state-developed assessments to measure student achievement of the science and social studies standards.

Student Incentives: The state has an exit exam that all students must take and pass to earn a high school diploma. This exam is based on the 7th-and 8th-grade *Courses of Study* in English and math and is taken by students beginning in the 11th grade. Students are allowed two opportunities per year to take and pass the exam; they are allowed to take the test until they pass.

Intervention/Remediation: The state requires that remediation be provided by districts to students who have failed to pass either the exit exam (given in 11th grade) or the 9th-grade exams. The state does not specify the form of remediation, nor does it provide supplementary funds. Districts are required to provide proof of remediation given to a student upon state request.

Alaska



Standards: In our 1995 report, we reviewed Alaska's draft *Performance Standards* in the core subjects. Those standards failed our criterion because they offered only broad K-12 statements of what students should learn, with no grade-level benchmarks at all. Though the social studies section was revised since last year's report, the new version suffers from the same lack of specific grade-level references.

In terms of international benchmarking, state officials told us that documents from Great Britain, Toronto, and Saskatchewan, Canada, were examined by the developers of the English standards. With so little information conveyed in Alaska's standards, however, it is difficult to see such research reflected.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	○
MATH	○	○
SCIENCE	○	○
SOCIAL STUDIES	○	○

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Alaska mandates that all students statewide be tested at grades 4, 8, and 11 in English and math, but the state assessments are not currently aligned with their standards. The state does plan to develop assessments aligned with its standards in the core subjects.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Arizona

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the *Arizona Essential Skills* in English, math, and science. The math standards were clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion, but the others were not. The state is currently in the process of developing new standards in the core academic subjects to replace the *Essential Skills*. We reviewed the latest drafts for this report.

The Arizona standards are organized into clusters referred to as "readiness," "foundations," "essentials," "proficiency," and "distinction." Early drafts of these standards failed to provide grade-level benchmarks, making it difficult to understand when students should be expected to reach these levels. This problem was recently overcome when the state announced that the clusters are intended to represent grades pre-K-K, 1-4, 5-8, 9-12, and high school honors levels.

The standards in every subject are written in clear, concise language, but we question whether they are comprehensive and detailed enough to provide the basis for a common core curriculum. Although the social studies standards are quite elaborate in their treatment of certain areas (e.g., economics and geography) history is dealt with by listing the eras and some of the events that should be covered, without defining what about those periods is most important. The other subjects could also benefit from greater elaboration on the content students should learn and, in some cases, more attention to what students should be able to do with that knowledge. The current drafts of Arizona's standards meet our "common core" criterion this year, but only by a very narrow margin. We consider them "borderline" documents that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◑
MATH	◕	◑
SCIENCE	◔	◑
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◑

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Arizona used to administer an assessment system linked to their *Essential Skills* standards, but that has been suspended until the new standards are complete. The state plans on developing new assessments linked to the new standards in math, reading, and writing.

Student Incentives: Arizona does not currently have exit exams in place, but state officials say they are planning to develop math, reading, and writing assessments that students will have to pass to graduate from high school. These assessments will be based on the new standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Arkansas

Standards: In our 1995 report, we reviewed Arkansas' draft *Curriculum Frameworks* in the core subjects. The science, reading, and social studies frameworks were in draft form; the math and language arts frameworks were final. For this year's report, we looked at the final versions of the science and reading frameworks, neither of which changed markedly from the drafts we reviewed last year. No newer version of the social studies framework was available.

The frameworks are organized by grade clusters of K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. As was the case last year, none of the documents except science is detailed and comprehensive enough to meet our "common core" criterion, but we consider science a "borderline" document that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers, parents and others.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◑	◑
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline ◕ ● Exemplary

Assessments: The state currently uses commercially developed assessments. In the fall of 1996, state-developed assessments linked to the standards in math and English will be given to all students in grades 4, 8, and 11/12. According to state officials, science and social studies assessments will also be developed in the future.

Student Incentives: Arkansas is in the process of developing a high school proficiency exam in math and English that students will have to pass in order to graduate. This proficiency exam will be administered beginning in the fall of 1996, but it is not clear when the state will begin to withhold diplomas from students who do not pass.

Intervention/Remediation: Arkansas currently funds a mandatory summer school program for elementary students that is not clearly linked to the state standards. According to state law, students assessed below grade-level proficiency in grades K-5 must attend this summer school program or be retained. However, the responsibility for determining which students should attend the program is left to districts and schools. And there is no consistent measure of student achievement used across districts to make these decisions. In addition to the summer program, the state plans to require districts to develop "educational improvement plans" for students not meeting the standards at the benchmark grades of 4, 8, and 11. The state is not yet committed to funding this intervention system.

California

Standards: In our 1995 report, we reviewed California's existing *Curriculum Frameworks* in the core subjects. The state is currently developing new standards, which are supposed to be completed by 1998. According to state officials, the existing curriculum frameworks will be revised to align with the new standards once they are completed. There are not yet any documents available for review.

The history/social science framework is the strongest of the four. In fact, it is so thorough in its presentation of the history, civics, and geography content and skills students should learn in every grade that we consider it one of a few "exemplary" documents in the subject. As with the rest of the frameworks, this one does not contain "standards" that can be separated from one another. It is presented as a grade-by-grade, course-by-course narrative, and the content is excellent. The science and math frameworks are also grounded in enough content to meet our criterion, but the math framework is a "borderline" case that will need to be improved in order to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future. There are two separate English frameworks in California, one for grades K-8, the other for 9-12. The high school framework is strong enough to meet our "common core" criterion, but the K-8 document is very weak and unclear. It provides no grade-level distinctions or references at all, which makes it of little use as a standards document. California passed our overall "common core" criterion in last year's report, but we had only seen the 9-12 English framework, not the one covering K-8. It is because of that document that California fails to meet our "common core" criterion in all four core subjects.

There is another, separate standards-setting effort in California worth mentioning, called the *Challenge Initiative.* Under this program launched by the state superintendent, committees have drafted standards in each of the core subjects, which will be available for districts to use on a voluntary basis. The drafts we have seen are very clear and specific about the content and skills students should learn in every grade. And, according to officials, the *Challenge* standards are designed to complement the curriculum frameworks. These standards are a real improvement from the English and math frameworks, they are excellent in history/social science, and they are solid in science, though not as specific as in the other subjects.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕*	◔
MATH	◐	◐
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	●	●

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◐	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

*Based on 9-12 framework only—see text above

Assessments: California presently has no statewide assessment system. As we reported last year, the *California Learning Assessment* (CLAS) was suspended over a year ago because of controversy around its appropriateness and its reliability in terms of measuring the content students should learn. Nothing has yet been developed to replace it. According to state officials, a new assessment system is under development; it will be aligned with the new standards in the core subjects once those are completed. These state assessments will be given to all students in grades 4/5, 8 and 10.

Student Incentives: There are currently no graduation exams in California, but there is a form of differentiated diploma students can earn based on passing the *Golden State Exams.* These exams are offered in algebra, geometry, economics, biology, chemistry, and coordinated science and they are linked to the expectations in the curriculum frameworks. The tests are optional for students, but those who take them and achieve high scores receive special recognition on their diplomas and their transcripts.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Colorado

Standards: In last year's report, we reviewed Colorado's final discussion draft of the *Model Content Standards* in the core subjects, except for civics and economics, which were and continue to be in early draft form. This year, we reviewed the adopted version of the standards in all the core subjects. No new drafts of civics and economics were available. In Colorado, each district is required by law to develop standards that meet or exceed the quality of the state's "models."

The state standards are organized by K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 clusters. Every subject met our "common core" criterion last year, and with few changes made in the adopted versions, they continue to measure up this year.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Presently, Colorado does not have a statewide assessment program, but one is currently under development. These state assessments will be tied to the standards and will assess students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in all four core subjects. Rather than testing all students statewide, Colorado will assess samples of students in every school.

Student Incentives: The state has no plans to attach student incentives to the standards, and as long as the assessments continue to test samples of students, rather than individual students, this will not be possible.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Connecticut

Standards: For our 1995 report, and for this year, we reviewed *Connecticut's Guides to Curriculum Development* in the core subjects. These *Guides* are still in place but the state is in the process of developing new documents that will replace them. No drafts of the new standards were available for review.

Of the four subject area documents, we found the math and science *Guides* to be clear and specific enough in terms of the content students should learn to meet the AFT "common core" criterion. The English and social studies standards are significantly weaker. Neither contain any references to particular grade levels in order to indicate *when* students should learn the material.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	○
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	○	○

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable ◔

Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline ◕ ● Exemplary

Assessments: Connecticut has state-developed assessments given to all students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10. According to state officials, the assessments are not directly linked to the *Curriculum Guides.*

Student Incentives: While there are no graduation exams in Connecticut, students can earn a differentiated diploma by achieving high enough scores on the 10th-grade assessments. These assessments are given in English, math, and science, but not social studies, and students can earn special recognition in any or all of these subjects.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Delaware

Standards: For both the 1995 and 1996 reports, we reviewed Delaware's *New Directions Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core subject areas. They have all been finalized and adopted.

The standards in each subject are broken into K-3, 4-5, 6-8, and high school clusters. All of the core subjects are clear and detailed enough to meet our "common core" criterion though the social studies standards would be significantly strengthened if they provided more detail in terms of the history content students should learn. The science standards are the most thoroughly grounded in content. We consider those standards "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states.

In developing the Delaware frameworks, standards-setters looked at a number of foreign materials to benchmark their work. These included curriculum documents from Australia in all the core subjects, math materials from Holland, science and social studies materials from England and Wales, and science documents from Japan.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	●	●
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕

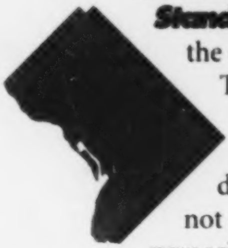
Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Delaware is developing assessments linked to the standards in the core subjects that will be given to all students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. These new assessments are expected to be in place by the 1997/98 school year. Meanwhile, the state is using an interim assessment system.

Student Incentives: There are no student incentives linked to the standards nor are there firm plans to develop any.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

District of Columbia



Standards: The District of Columbia is in the process of developing "content standards" in the core subjects. For our 1995 report, we reviewed the draft math and science standards. They were not clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion.

This year, we reviewed the final versions of the math and science standards and drafts of the history and English standards. The standards are organized by what students should know at the end of grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. The revised math standards are not significantly different from last year and therefore receive the same judgment. The new science standards are clearer and more comprehensive than last year and now meet our "common core" criterion. The English standards are also clear and specific enough to meet our criterion, although some of the standards focus more on *how* students should learn than on *what* they should learn.

The history standards are the strongest of the four subjects. They are quite clear and specific in each grade cluster, and they are firmly rooted in historical content. In fact, the D.C. standards are among the best we've seen in terms of expecting students to learn a substantial amount of history from the elementary grades onward. We consider these standards "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states.

According to officials, standards-setters in D.C. looked at translated science exams and a report about international math standards during the development process.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◕
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◔	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	●

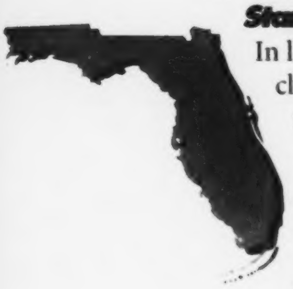
Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: D.C. currently has a commercially developed assessment system that tests all students in math, writing and science in grades 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11. The District is also developing a new assessment program which will be aligned with the new standards in the four core subjects. These new assessments will be given to students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11.

Student Incentives: Although the District does not currently have student incentives or consequences linked to their assessments, officials say they are planning to institute a system of "transition gates," whereby assessment results will guide student promotion decisions.

Intervention/Remediation: According to district officials, students who do not pass the assessments will be required to receive extra academic help, which the district will partially fund.

Florida



Standards: Florida is in the process of moving from old to new curriculum frameworks. In last year's report, we reviewed an early draft of the new science framework. It was not clear and explicit enough about the content all students should learn and therefore failed our "common core" criterion.

For this year's report, we reviewed new drafts of the frameworks in all four core subjects. These new frameworks represent a substantial improvement from the version we reviewed last year.The standards in each of these documents are arranged in grade clusters of pre-K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12, and they are all very clear and well-grounded in content. All four subjects meet our "common core" criterion, and we consider the math and social studies frameworks to be "exemplary." The math framework strikes a good balance between skills and content and provides a significant amount of detail within each grade cluster. The social studies framework is very thorough, especially in terms of the history students should learn. It is worth mentioning that the state publishes the standards in separate documents referred to as the *Sunshine State Standards.* The only difference between these and the curriculum frameworks is that the *Sunshine Standards* do not include the "sample performance descriptions" which are meant to elaborate on the expectations in the standards. According to state officials, the *Sunshine Standards* are final but the curriculum frameworks are still in draft form.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◕
MATH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	●
SCIENCE	◔	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	●

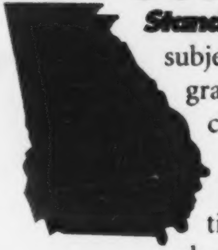
Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: In last year's report, we noted that there would not be new assessments developed to measure the new standards. According to state officials, the state now plans to develop such assessments aligned with the standards once the new frameworks are completed. However, the new assessments will only cover reading and math.

Student Incentives: Florida currently has a "minimum competency" graduation exam covering math and English. Students first take the exam in 11th grade, and they are allowed up to five attempts by the end of 12th grade. The test must be passed in order to graduate. Plans are to align this math and English exam with the new frameworks once they are completed.

Intervention/Remediation: According to Florida state statute, "instructional assistance" must be provided by districts to students who do not pass any section of the high school exit exam. The form of instructional assistance is not specified nor is funding provided by the state.

Georgia



Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the *Quality Core Curriculum* in the four core subject areas. There were no new documents to review for this report. The frameworks are grade by grade in K-8 and course by course in high school. All four subject areas are clear and specific enough to meet our criterion, but both the English and social studies standards could be improved—English, by making the grade-by-grade progression clearer (rather than simply repeating things in each grade) and by paying more attention to literature; social studies, by paring down the standards, particularly those emphasizing skills without content.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Georgia assesses all of its students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. Currently, only English and math are assessed, but social studies and science are both to be added by Spring 1997. According to state officials, the assessments are directly linked to the state standards.

Student Incentives: Georgia has exit exams that, according to state officials, are based on the 11th-grade standards in the *Quality Core Curriculum.* As mentioned above, only English and math are currently assessed, with the other core subjects to follow by Spring 1997.

Intervention/Remediation: Georgia used to require districts and schools to intervene and provide remediation to students who did not meet a passing standard on the state assessments in elementary, middle, and high school. According to officials, the state backed up that mandate with funds and technical assistance. Due to recent changes in state law, however, remediation is no longer required. The state will maintain the remedial program and continue to assist districts and schools that request help.

Hawaii

Standards: In both last year's and this year's reports, we reviewed Hawaii's *Performance Standards* in the four core subjects. The standards are arranged in K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12 grade clusters and their quality varies from subject to subject. The math and science standards meet our "common core" criterion. They are clearer and more firmly grounded in content than the English and social studies standards. We consider the social studies and English standards "borderline" cases that meet our criterion this year, but only by a very narrow margin. The English standards are too vague in many areas and need to be fleshed out in greater detail. The social studies standards are most problematic in their treatment of history. While historical events or places may be listed, there is no supporting information defining what is most significant about those events or places for students to learn. These two documents will need to be strengthened in order to be of maximum use to teachers, parents and others in the future.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◐	◐
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◐	◐

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◐	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Hawaii currently requires the use of commercially developed assessments in math, reading and language arts for all students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10. The state is developing new assessments meant to measure student attainment of the standards in each of the core subjects.

Student Incentives: Hawaii has an exit exam students must pass in order to graduate. It is not currently linked to the state standards and it is unclear whether it will be in the future. There is also an advanced diploma students can achieve by taking certain courses and earning certain grades in those courses. This is a good start, but since that diploma is not directly linked to *both* the state standards and assessments, it doesn't meet our "differentiated diploma" criterion.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Idaho

Standards: In our 1995 report, we reviewed the *Idaho K-12 Content Guides and Frameworks* in the four core subject areas. While the math framework was stronger than the others, none of them provided enough content to meet our "common core" criterion.

Idaho is currently in the process of developing new standards in the core subjects to replace the frameworks. For this report, we reviewed drafts of the new *Skills-Based Curriculum Guides* covering the elementary grades. The state plans to develop guides for grades 7-12 when the K-6 guides are complete.

The K-6 guides are a sharp contrast from the older frameworks. They provide grade-by-grade standards that are well grounded in content and quite detailed. In fact, the English standards are as detailed as we've seen. There are four separate guides for English, one each for reading, writing, language, and spelling. All four subjects are clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◕
MATH	◔	◕
SCIENCE	◔	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◕

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline ◕ ● Exemplary

Assessments: Idaho currently uses commercially developed standardized tests, but the state is in the process of developing additional assessments in writing, math, and science, which will be linked to the new curriculum guides when they are complete. Idaho is not planning to develop any social studies assessments, so the state does not meet our criterion for having assessments linked to the standards in all four core subjects. The curriculum guides will also contain sample assessment questions that districts and schools can use to measure student achievement of the standards in all four subjects, but these will not be part of the official state assessment system.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the state standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Illinois

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the *State Goals for Learning* in the four core subject areas. The *Goals* were broad statements of what students should learn without specific grade-level breakdowns. In order to provide more guidance to teachers and others, the state had developed "learning objectives" which showed how the *Goals* could apply to various grade levels. These "objectives" were fairly strong in certain subjects, but they were there for illustrative purposes only and were not tied to the assessment system. In other words, the state assessed only the broad *Goals* themselves, which were not clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion.

Illinois is in the process of revising its broad *State Goals* and developing new *Academic Standards* in the four core subjects to flesh out the expectations under each goal. We reviewed early drafts of these standards for this year's report. The standards are organized into the following clusters: early elementary, late elementary, middle/junior high, early high school, and late high school. The math standards are the clearest and most detailed in terms of the content students should learn. The science standards provide some clear content, but most of this is in a form referred to as "examples," and it is unclear whether those are things all students should learn. We found the same problem in the social studies standards, where attention to historical content is particularly weak. Although periods of history are listed in the standards, most of the specific content (particular civilizations, events, etc.) is contained in "examples," and even those aren't clear and comprehensive enough. The English standards provide adequate detail in some areas and some grade clusters, but not in all of them. Some of the standards need to be fleshed out in greater detail.

The Illinois math standards meet our "common core" criterion. The English and science standards also meet our criterion, but only by a very narrow margin. We consider them "borderline" documents that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future. The social studies standards do not meet our criterion.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◑
MATH	◔	◕
SCIENCE	◔	◑
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔

Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: The Illinois state assessment system is linked to the broad *State Goals for Learning*. Reading, writing, and math assessments are given to all students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10, and science and social studies are assessed in grades 4, 7, and 11. The state is planning to revise its state assessment system as necessary to reflect the revised *State Goals* and the new *Academic Standards*.

Student Incentives: Although Illinois does not currently have student incentives linked to its *State Goals*, there is pending legislation that would make state assessment scores part of students' permanent records. The state is also considering developing a differentiated high school diploma system tied to the state assessments.

Intervention/Remediation: Currently, there is none required. However, legislation is pending that would require districts to provide remedial services to elementary students who do not meet the state standards. These services would be funded by the state. Because this legislation was still pending and had not been formally signed into law at the time of this report, we did not give the state credit for this or for the incentives mentioned above in Table 4 in the *Findings* section.

Indiana

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the Indiana *Proficiency Guides* in math, science and English. The math standards were the clearest and most firmly rooted in content, although the quality was uneven from grade to grade and the content was least clear in high school. Because of this unevenness, we considered the math standards a "borderline" document. Neither the English nor the science standards contained enough content to meet our criterion.

For this year's report, we reviewed the same *Guides* as last year plus additional high school *Competencies* in science and math, which are meant to complement the *Proficiency Guides*. We have also reviewed an early draft of the Indiana social studies *Proficiency Guide*.

The English standards are the only ones that have not changed since last year's report. They are organized into K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade clusters, but the standards are not clear and specific enough about the content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion. Both the science and the math standards have been improved with the addition of the high school *Competencies*. The science *Proficiency Guide* is arranged by K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 grade clusters while the high school science *Competencies* are arranged in a course-by-course format. Although the *Guide* provides clear language on the scientific skills students should acquire, it is not strong enough on the science content students should learn. This is particularly a problem in the middle and high school grades. The addition of the *Competencies* helps take care of this problem at the high school level by emphasizing both the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn. When we look at both science documents together, we consider them a "borderline" case that meets our "common core" criterion this year, but will need to be improved in order to be of maximum value to teachers and others in the future.

The math *Proficiency Guide* provides grade-by-grade standards through the 8th grade and now, with the addition of the math *Competencies*, there are course-by-course standards in high school. The addition of the course-by-course standards significantly improves the overall quality of the Indiana math standards. We now consider those standards "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states. The new social studies standards are strong enough to meet our "common core" criterion, but we would prefer to see more history content in the elementary grades.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◐	●
SCIENCE	◔	◐
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◕

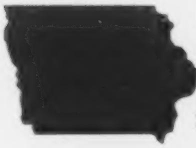
Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◐	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Indiana assesses all of its students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 in math and English only. The assessments are linked to the state standards. State statute allows for science and social studies to be added at a later date, but there are no firm plans to do this.

Student Incentives: Indiana does not currently have a high school graduation exam. Beginning with the class of 2000, however, all students will have to take and pass exams in English and math in order to graduate. According to state officials, these assessments will be given in the 10th grade and will be based on the 10th-grade high school *Competencies.* Science and social studies will not be part of the graduation standards.

Indiana also has an *Academic Honors Diploma* students can earn by taking certain courses and achieving certain grades in those courses. Since the diploma is not directly linked to *both* the state standards and assessments, it does not meet our "differentiated diploma" criterion.

Intervention/Remediation: Indiana has an elaborate remedial program that is funded by the state and required of all districts and schools. The state has established four achievement levels (or "tiers") on the state assessments that it considers low enough to warrant extra help for students. Students who score in tiers 1 and 2 (both below the passing standard) are *required* to receive remedial assistance. Students who score in tiers 3 or 4 (3 = slightly below the passing mark; 4 = slightly above) are eligible for state assistance, but it is not required. The state has developed a funding formula that directs more money to those schools with the most tier 1 and 2 students. After that money has been distributed, schools can solicit the state for further funds and services for tier 3 and 4 students. Once again, this system is only in effect for English and math, since those are the only subjects the state assesses.

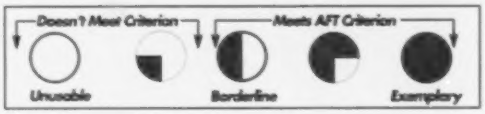


Iowa

Standards: As reported in our 1995 report, Iowa has no state standards. According to state officials, however, there are plans to develop sample standards for districts to use as models. These may include standards written in other states.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	
MATH	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	
SCIENCE	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	


Doesn't Meet Criterion
Meets AFT Criterion
Unusable
Borderline
Exemplary

Assessments: There are no state assessments nor are there any plans to develop any in the future.

Student Incentives: None

Intervention/Remediation: None required

Kansas

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the Kansas *Curriculum Standards* in the core academic subjects. The science and social studies standards were in draft form; the math and English standards were finalized. We reviewed a new draft of social studies and the finalized science standards for this year's report. However, these were not significantly different from those we reviewed last year.

The Kansas standards are all organized by grade clusters (the breakdown is different in each subject), but none are clear and specific enough about the academic content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion.

In some cases, elaboration is provided through instructional "examples," but it is clear in these documents that these are not part of the standards. This becomes a real problem in a subject like social studies, where the only substantive reference to particular events or periods of history appears in the "examples." It significantly weakens the standards and reduces the chance that students across the state will learn a common core curriculum and be held to common expectations.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Kansas has state assessments aligned with the curriculum standards that are given to all students in the core subjects.

Student Incentives: There are no student incentives linked to the state standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Kentucky

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed *Kentucky's Learner Outcomes and Curriculum Framework* in science, math, and social studies. We were unable to find any distinct English standards to review. The outcomes that did exist were not strong enough to meet our "common core" criterion.

Since our 1995 report, Kentucky has made significant strides in the area of standards. The state has developed a draft document called *Core Content* in an effort to flesh out the subject matter students will need to learn to meet the existing "outcomes" and to perform well on the state assessments. The standards are organized by what students should know at the end of specific grades in elementary, middle, and high school—the grades vary by subject, depending on which year the assessments are given.

The science standards are the most thorough in terms of specifying the content students should learn. The math standards are not as thorough as science. Although they offer important concepts and skills, further elaboration would help to strengthen them.

The English and social studies standards are not clear and specific enough to meet our criterion. Although the English standards address reading fairly thoroughly, the writing section needs strengthening. Currently, these standards provide little indication of what distinguishes elementary from high school writing. If this kind of detailed information exists in state asessment scoring guides or elsewhere, as state officials claim, it should be included in the *Core Content* as well. The social studies standards fail our criterion because of their insufficient grounding in history. Although the most recent draft of the standards pays more attention to specific history content than earlier drafts, the standards are still too broad. We would hope to see more elaboration on the particular periods, events, and lessons of U.S. and world history in future drafts.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	◔
MATH	◔	◑
SCIENCE	◔	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

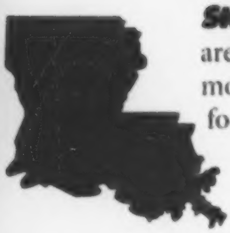
75

Assessments: Kentucky has a state assessment system tied to their standards and given to all students across the state. Students are assessed in the core subject areas in grades 4/5, 7/8, and 11/12. The exact grade varies by subject.

Student Incentives: Kentucky currently has no rewards or consequences for students linked to their standards.

Intervention/Remediation: Kentucky law requires districts to provide "extended school services" to students who are not performing well enough to meet the state standards, and special funds are provided by the state for this purpose.

Louisiana



Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed *Curriculum Guides* in all four core subject areas. We found three of the four subjects to be clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion. The English document had a lot of information, but it was not clear and focused enough to be useful to teachers, parents, and others.

Louisiana is in the process of developing new curriculum frameworks in the core subjects that will replace the *Guides.* We reviewed drafts of the math and science frameworks for this year's report. English and social studies will not be available until 1997.

The frameworks are broken down into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters. Although it is a lot less detailed than the *Curriculum Guides*, the science framework is still clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion. The math framework, however, is far less detailed and less clear in terms of the content students should learn. It does not meet our criterion.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT
MATH	◕	◔
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

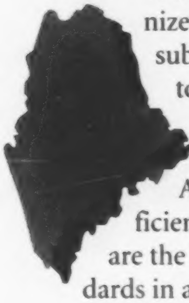
Assessments: Louisiana's state assessments are currently linked to the *Curriculum Guides* in the core subjects and are given to all students in grades 3, 5, and 7 and in high school. According to the state officials, there will be no new assessments developed nor will the existing assessments be realigned with the new frameworks. The result will be new standards and an old assessment system that does not measure whether students are meeting the new standards.

Student Incentives: According to state law, students who don't pass the state assessments in the core subjects in grades 3, 5, and 7 are not to be promoted to the next grade. Students are also not able to graduate without passing assessments in the core subjects that are first given in 10th grade. As mentioned earlier, however, all of these high-stakes assessments are linked to the current state *Curriculum Guides*, but there are no plans to align these assessments with the new frameworks. This disconnect between the standards, assessments, and stakes will become a major problem for everyone in the schools.

Intervention/Remediation: Louisiana requires districts to provide remediation to students who fail any of the state assessments. The state provides oversight, funding, and technical assistance for these purposes.

Maine

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the draft *Learning Results* in all four core subject areas. The standards did not have any grade-level benchmarks and, therefore, did not meet our "common core" criterion.



For this year's report, we reviewed a new draft of the *Learning Results,* which are organized into four clusters: pre-K-2, 3-4, 5-8, and 9-12. Although the new draft represents a substantial improvement from what we reviewed last year, more work will be needed to strengthen them. Science is the only subject area that is grounded in enough content to meet our criterion. Math comes close, but the content is overshadowed by excessive attention to application skills that are disconnected from the content. Although they provide a fair amount of detail, the social studies standards pay insufficient attention to the historical content students should learn. The English standards are the least clear and specific of the four subjects. According to state officials, the standards in all four subjects are currently being revised, but no drafts were available for review in time for this report.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	◔
MATH	○	◔
SCIENCE	○	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	○	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Maine's current assessment system tests all students in reading, writing, and math in grades 4, 8, and 11, and tests samples of students in science and social studies in those same grades. According to state officials, these assessments will be realigned to reflect the *Learning Results* once they are finalized.

Student Incentives: The issue of high school exit assessments linked to the new standards did come before the state legislature this year but it was not approved. A task force has been appointed to study the issue further.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Maryland

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the *Maryland Learning Outcomes* for grades K-8, and early drafts of the *High School Core Learning Goals* in the core subjects. Taken as a whole, these standards were not clear and specific enough regarding the content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion. This year we looked again at the K-8 *Learning Outcomes* and also at the final draft of the *High School Core Learning Goals.*

The K-8 standards (in place since 1990) are different in both structure and quality from the high school standards. The high school standards are much clearer, more specific, and more content based than the K-8 *Outcomes.* Taken alone, the high school standards in each subject would meet our "common core" criterion. The K-8 *Outcomes* are considerably weaker, except in math. The science and English K-8 *Outcomes* provide no grade-level references at all. When we look at the K-8 and high school standards as a whole in each subject, only the combined math standards are strong enough to meet our "common core" criterion. It is not clear whether the state plans to revise the K-8 *Outcomes* to align with the new high school standards.

Maryland has taken a unique approach to international benchmarking. In cooperation with the German and Taiwanese governments, the state has arranged for some of their math and science assessments to be given to students in these countries so that Maryland officials can analyze the results. The state is also considering translating exams from Germany and giving them to Maryland students to see how well they perform.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	◕
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

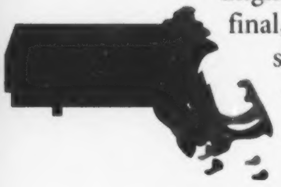
Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Maryland has state assessments in the core subjects linked to the *Outcomes* in grades 3, 5, and 8. The state is also developing end-of-course assessments for high school students that will be aligned with the new *Core Learning Goals.*

Student Incentives: Maryland currently requires students to pass a minimum competency test in order to graduate. The state plans to phase out this test in the future and replace it with the high school assessments mentioned above. Students will be be required to pass these assessments in order to graduate. Maryland also plans to make a firm connection between the high school standards and the entrance requirements to state universities. Plans are to make certain scores on the high school assessments a requirement for entry into higher education.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Massachusetts



Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the draft *Curriculum Content Chapters* in English, social studies and science; math was not yet available. This year, we reviewed the final, adopted versions of the math and science frameworks and drafts of English and social studies. The English and social studies frameworks are currently being revised, but new drafts weren't available in time for this report.

The frameworks are broken down into pre-K-4, 5-8, 9-10, and 11-12 grade clusters. The three documents we reviewed last year have not changed significantly and therefore receive the same judgments. The draft science framework was clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion, but the others were not. The math framework, which is new since last year's report, is fairly clear and specific, but we consider it a "borderline" document that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future. It is unclear whether the "examples" under each of the standards are *extensions* of the content and skills students should learn or *illustrations* that are not part of the standards.

According to state officials, Massachusetts looked at science and math curricula from England, Australia and other countries when developing those subject frameworks.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◑
SCIENCE	●	●
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔

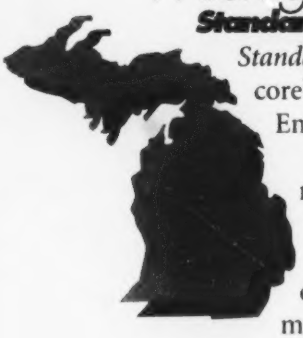
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Massachusetts is in the process of developing state assessments in the core subjects that will be linked to the frameworks and given to all students in grades 4, 8, and 10. The first administration of the new assessments is scheduled for the 1998/99 school year. The current state assessments, which are not linked to the state frameworks, were given for the last time this year.

Student Incentives: Massachusetts is developing a series of 10th-grade exit exams that all students will be required to pass for graduation. These exams will be in all four core subjects and will be based on the 10th-grade standards. Once they've passed these exams, students will have an opportunity to work toward two different types of diplomas, each connected to different standards. It is not yet clear whether there will be separate state assessments for students to pass to attain these diplomas.

Intervention/Remediation: Students who fail the 10th-grade assessments are eligible to receive remedial services, which the state partially funds.

Michigan



Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the draft *Core Curriculum Content Standards* in the four core subject areas. Although the standards met our "common core" criterion, they did so by only a very narrow margin in math, social studies, and English.

This year, we reviewed the new version of Michigan's standards, which have been renamed *Model Content Standards.* The standards are broken down into early elementary, later elementary, middle school, and high school clusters. The science standards have been strengthened since last year with the addition of key concepts under each standard. These help to make the expectations more explicit and more firmly grounded in content. The math, English, and social studies standards are not as strong as science in this respect. While they touch upon essential knowledge and skills students should learn by the various benchmark levels, these standards would be stronger if they provided more elaboration in terms of the underlying content students should learn. We consider the math, English, and social studies standards "borderline" documents that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◐	◐
MATH	◐	◐
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◐	◐

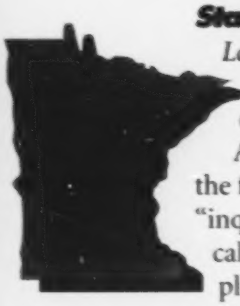
Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◐ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Michigan has a state assessment system that is being realigned to the content standards. According to state officials, the assessments are and will continue to be given to all students across the state in grades 4, 7, and 11 in math and reading and grades 5, 8, and 11 in science and writing. A social studies assessment will be added in 1999.

Student Incentives: Michigan has a differentiated diploma system. The 11th-grade assessments, which are based on the 10th-grade standards, are given in science, math, reading and writing (social studies will be added in 1999). Graduation is not dependent on passing these exams. Instead, students who pass the assessments receive a "state-endorsed" diploma, which, according to officials, gives them a better chance of getting into state colleges and universities.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Minnesota



Standards: Minnesota is in the process of developing new standards called the *Profile of Learning*. When preparing our 1995 report, it wasn't clear whether the *Profile* standards would cover the elementary and middle school grades. It is now clear that those standards are organized into four clusters—primary, intermediate, middle, and high school. Although the traditional names of the disciplines aren't used, the *Profile of Learning* covers the four core subjects. For example, the social studies standards are sometimes found under the "inquiry" heading, other times "peoples and cultures," and the science standards are sometimes called "science" and other times "inquiry." In our view, this attempt at integrating the disciplines makes the standards harder to read and the subject matter harder to decipher.

None of the subjects in the *Profile* are detailed and comprehensive enough to meet our "common core" criterion. The math and science standards do a better job of highlighting the content students should learn than the other subjects, but not enough elaboration is provided. The social studies standards are quite vague and pay insufficient attention to history. The English standards are stronger in some areas than others, but too many things are left out. For example, there are standards describing some of the different purposes and styles of writing, but none that deal sufficiently with grammar and mechanics.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: The way in which Minnesota will assess whether students are meeting the *Profile of Learning* standards is complicated. The state is in the process of developing a variety of "performance packages," which are supposed to measure certain elements within the *Profile of Learning*. Districts will be able to draw from these "packages" or develop their own based on certain guidelines, but because there will be a large number of these assessment packages, each covering certain state standards, it is unclear how the state will be able to monitor which standards are being met. Minnesota is also developing "minimum competency" tests in reading, writing, and mathematics—called the *Basic Standards*—which will be given to students in 8th grade.

Student Incentives: The *Basic Standards* tests must be passed in order for students to graduate. According to state officials, students will also be required to meet certain elements within the *Profile of Learning*, but as mentioned earlier, it isn't clear exactly how this will be measured.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

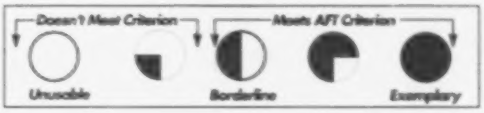
Mississippi

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed Mississippi's *Curriculum Structures* in the core academic subjects. Every subject except for science was in final, adopted form last year. Since then, the science standards have been finalized and a new version of the English framework has been prepared and is awaiting state board approval. We did not receive the new English framework in time to review it for this report.

The math, science, and social science documents present standards grade by grade through 8th grade and then course by course in high school. The English and reading frameworks (separate documents) present standards grade by grade through 12th grade. All of Mississippi's frameworks were clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion last year, and since there were no significant changes to these documents, the same judgments carry over to this year.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕



Assessments: Mississippi uses a combination of commercial and state-developed assessments. Only the assessments at the high school level were developed for the purpose of measuring student achievement of the state standards. These high school assessments are comprised of exit exams in math and English, which all students take in 11th grade, and end-of-course exams in U.S. history, algebra, and biology, which all students must take when finished with these required courses. State officials claim that the commercially developed standardized reading, language arts, writing, and math tests they use in the elementary and middle school grades are also aligned with their standards, but since those tests are designed to be used in many states, each with its own standards, it is difficult for us to understand how they could be well aligned with the Mississippi *Curriculum Structures.*

Student Incentives: All Mississippi students must pass the exit exams mentioned above in order to graduate. However, these only cover math and English, and they are "minimum competency" tests based on 8th-grade standards. According to state officials, plans for the near future are to upgrade the content of the exams to measure 10th-grade standards or above, but there are no plans to develop exit exams in science and social studies.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Missouri

Standards: Missouri has a set of very broad standards in the core subjects that do not provide any grade-level indictors or benchmarks describing *when* students should meet the standards. We reviewed a draft of these standards in last year's report. At that time, they were not based in the core disciplines.

The broad standards are now organized around the core academic disciplines, and Missouri is in the process of developing curriculum frameworks to elaborate on what students should learn at various grade levels. These draft frameworks are the documents we analyzed for this report. The science framework is the strongest of the four. It is thoroughly grounded in science content and does a very good job of describing how students should be able to apply that content knowledge. It is also organized into K-2, 3-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters, while the rest of the subjects (except for some parts of the "communication arts" framework) combine the elementary level into one K-4 cluster.

While the science framework meets our "common core" criterion, the other three frameworks are not as firmly rooted in the content of those subject areas. The social studies framework is quite lengthy, but there is no mention of any particular historical content that students should learn. History is presented more as a skill to be used than knowledge to be acquired, and it therefore fails our "common core" criterion. The communication arts framework is stronger than social studies. While it doesn't completely leave out any important element of the subject (as social studies does), it doesn't address literature completely enough, nor is it very thorough or detailed about grammar and other writing conventions. We consider it a "borderline" document that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future.

The math framework addresses both content and skills, but there is a much heavier orientation toward skills. Many of the standards emphasizing math skills do so without adequate grounding in content knowledge, making it very difficult to understand what students are expected to learn. Although some of the "sample learning activities" included with the standards help make it clearer to readers the types of mathematical concepts and content students will need to learn to apply the discrete skills, those sample activities are included for *illustrative* purposes only—they are not considered part of the standards. For these reasons, we consider the math framework a "borderline" document. A stronger connection between knowledge and skills will need to be forged in future drafts.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	◐
MATH	○	◐
SCIENCE	○	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	○	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◐ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: The state is developing assessments linked to the standards that will be given to all students in the 4th, 8th, and 10th grades. These assessments will replace the current assessment system.

Student Incentives: There are no plans to attach student incentives to the standards.

Iintervention/Remediation: None required.

Montana

Standards: Montana has established *Learner Goals* in the core subjects as a part of its school accreditation process. Districts are required to develop their own standards and curricula based on these *Goals*. The *Goals* themselves are broad statements about what students should learn with no grade-level benchmarks describing when students should learn the material. Montana has also developed *Model Learner Goals* in each subject, which break down each of the broad *Goals* into what students should learn at the primary, intermediate, and high school graduation levels.

In last year's report, we reviewed the social studies and communication arts *Model Learner Goals*, neither or which was clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion. This year, we also reviewed the science and math *Goals*. These are clearer and more content-based than the others, but because they are only considered "models" of what students *could* learn rather than "standards" that all students are *expected* to meet, the *Goals* fail to satisfy our criterion.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔
SCIENCE	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Montana currently requires districts to assess students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in the core subjects using one of three state-approved, commercially developed, standardized assessments. According to state law, districts must also develop their own assessments linked to their local standards. However, the state will continue to require administration and reporting of the commercially developed assessments.

Student Incentives: There are no student consequences or incentives linked to the state standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Nebraska

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed Nebraska's *Math and Science Framework*. This year we also reviewed the new *Social Studies Framework*. There is no English document to review, but state officials say that plans exist to develop one.

The math and science standards are broken into elementary, middle and secondary clusters, but neither are clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion. It should be noted, however, that the science standards are slightly stronger than the math, providing more detail and content, and breaking the standards into four levels—primary, upper elementary, middle, and secondary. The new social studies standards are not grounded in enough content to meet our criterion. They pay insufficient attention to history in general and U.S. history specifically.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◐	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Nebraska has no state assessments and there are no specific plans to develop any in the future.

Student Incentives: There are no student incentives attached to the standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

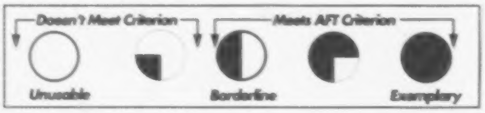
Nevada

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the Nevada *Course of Study* guides in the core subjects. These were uneven in quality from subject to subject, and as a whole, did not meet our "common core" criterion. The state is in the process of developing new standards, but only a draft of English was available for review. The new English standards are broken down into K, 1-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-10, and 11-12 grade clusters but are not clear and specific enough to meet our criterion.

According to state officials, those involved in the development of the new English standards analyzed curriculum documents from England, Australia, and New Zealand.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT
SCIENCE	◔	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT



Assessments: Nevada has both commercial and state-developed tests, none of which are currently linked to the standards. The state plans to align the exit exam (discussed below) to the standards in the future.

Student Incentives: The state currently has a minimum competency exit exam covering math, reading, and writing. Students have five chances to pass the test and they must do so in order to graduate. The state is currently developing a new version of this test, which, according to state officials, will measure an 11th-grade competency level.

Intervention/Remediation: State law requires districts to provide remediation to students who score below a certain level on the exit exam, but no state funds are made available for this.

New Hampshire

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the draft *Curriculum Frameworks* in English and social studies and the adopted frameworks in math and science. The frameworks were all clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion.

This year, we reviewed the adopted versions of the English and social studies frameworks. The standards are organized according to what students should know and be able to do at the end of grades 3, 6, and 10, except for the social studies document, which uses grades 6, 10, and 12 as benchmarks. The final version of the English document is an improvement from the draft we reviewed last year, providing more content and continuity. The new social studies standards have slightly changed in content and format but are still strong enough to meet our criterion.

According to state officials, standards from Toronto and Ottawa, Canada, were consulted when developing their English standards. There is no indication that international benchmarking occurred in any of the other subject areas.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: New Hampshire does not currently have a state assessment system. The state is, however, developing assessments that will be linked to their frameworks and given to all students in grades 3, 6, and 10 in the core subject areas.

Student Incentives: New Hampshire does not currently have, nor are there plans to develop, student incentives linked to the frameworks.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

New Jersey

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed New Jersey's draft *Core Curriculum Content Standards* in the core subjects. Three of the four subject areas were not clear and detailed enough about the content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion. The science standards were the strongest of the four, but they only met our criterion by a narrow margin.

For this year's report, we reviewed the recently finalized and adopted standards in each of the core subjects. They are broken down into 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade clusters and show some improvement from the drafts we saw last year. There was a clear effort to get rid of social studies and English standards that dealt with children's behavior and feelings and to be more specific about the periods of history students should learn about in social studies. On the latter point, however, the standards still don't go far enough. There is a list of periods in American and world history that should be covered in the curriculum, but there is very little elaboration on the particular events, issues, people, and themes that are most important to learn about within those periods.

The science standards continue to be the strongest of the four subjects and the only one that meets our "common core" criterion. The math standards overemphasize skills without adequate grounding in content knowledge. The English standards are not clear and thorough enough to provide the necessary guidance to teachers, curriculum developers, and others and are particularly weak in the areas of writing and literature.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◑	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

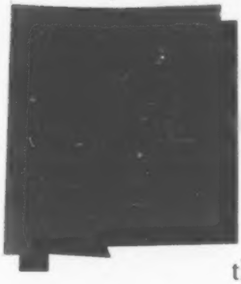
Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Currently, New Jersey assesses all students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, writing, and math. These assessments will soon be aligned with the new standards. The state is also developing assessments linked to the standards in science and social studies, which will be fully in place by the 1999/2000 school year.

Student Incentives: New Jersey currently uses its 11th-grade assessments in English and math as exit exams, which students must pass in order to graduate. According to state officials, these exams are targeted at an 11th-grade proficiency level. Beginning with the 1999/2000 school year, high school students in New Jersey will be required to pass exams linked to the standards in all four core subjects in order to graduate.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

New Mexico



Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the state *Competency Frameworks*, which provided very little information about what students should learn and failed our "common core" criterion. The state is in the process of developing new *Content Standards* to replace those frameworks. For this year's report, we reviewed drafts of the *Content Standards* in math, science, and English. The social studies standards were not available for review.

The new standards are broken into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters and they show significant improvement over the old standards. But only two of the subjects provide enough specific content to meet our "common core" criterion. The science standards are the strongest in this regard. The math standards are weaker, and although they pass our criterion this year, we consider them a "borderline" case that will need to be improved in order to be of maximum value to teachers and others in the future.

According to state officials, standards and exams from a variety of countries were consulted while developing New Mexico's standards. These materials came from the AFT's *Setting World Class Standards* kits.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	◑
SCIENCE	◔	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

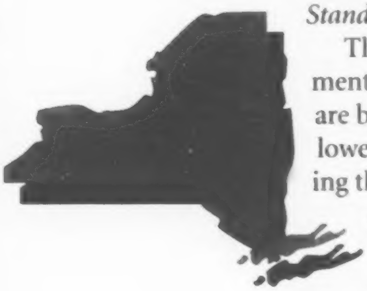
Assessments: New Mexico currently has both commercial and state-developed assessments, none of which are linked to any standards. The state plans to develop new assessments aligned with the standards that are currently being developed.

Student Incentives: New Mexico has a minimum competency exit exam, which covers the core subjects. Passing the test is required to receive a diploma, but if the test is not passed, the student can graduate with a certificate of completion. Students can attempt to take the test as many times as needed and can continue taking it up to five years after graduation. There are no plans to align the exit exam with the new standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

New York

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the draft *Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Standards* in the four core subject areas. None of these documents was clear and specific enough about the content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion.



Since last year's report, the name of these documents has been changed to *Learning Standards*, and new drafts have been completed in each of the core subjects.

The New York standards are organized by what students should learn in the elementary, intermediate, and commencement grades. For each of these levels, there are broad standards, followed by "indicators" that elaborate on the standards, followed by "examples" of tasks students could perform to provide evidence of meeting the standards. Though in some subjects these "examples" provide some very clear language as to what's expected of students, it is difficult to tell whether they should be considered an *extension* of the standards (and thereby subject to coverage on the state assessments), or simply an *illustration* of some of the ways the standards could be met. For the purposes of this report, we did not consider these examples to be an official part of the standards.

Of the four core subjects, the science standards are the clearest and most firmly rooted in academic content. They meet our "common core" criterion. The math and English standards meet our criterion as well, but they do so only by a narrow margin. We consider both to be "borderline" documents that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future. The math standards are so highly focused on how to apply math in "real-world" situations, that the actual math content gets overshadowed and becomes hard to find. The English standards are very much focused on the purposes and uses of language, and though they are quite strong in some areas, they could elaborate more on the study of literature, grammar, and other conventions of writing. Although the social studies standards have sections on U.S. and world history, they are not clear and detailed enough about the actual history content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion.

According to state officials, the next step will be to develop curriculum guides to elaborate on the core knowledge and skills students will be expected to learn in every grade. These guides are meant to complement the *Learning Standards*, and state officials expect the guides to provide the level of detail and content that teachers and other school staff will need to help their students pursue high standards in their classrooms.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◐
MATH	◔	◐
SCIENCE	◔	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◐	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: New York has state assessments that cover the core subjects and are given to all students in a variety of grades. These assessments will be realigned to link with the standards when they are completed.

Student Incentives: Currently, New York has a two-tiered diploma system. Students can either take *Regents* courses and exams, which have traditionally been considered for the college-bound, or they can take *Regents Competency Tests*, which are minimum competency tests in the core subjects. Students must achieve a certain score on the *Regents* exams or pass the *Competency Tests* in the core subjects in order to graduate, and they receive a different diploma depending on which exams they pass.

The state has recently decided to begin phasing out the *Competency Tests* and to require all students to take the more rigorous *Regents* exams. There will continue to be a differentiated diploma system during the transition period, but the long-term vision in New York is to move toward a single, high-level diploma. During the transition period, students who score high enough on the exams and who pass certain required courses will earn a *Regents* diploma; students who score in a lower range on the exams will receive a general diploma; and students who don't reach a minimum level will not graduate. The state expects to phase in a higher passing score on the exams over time. According to state officials, the *Regents* exams will be revised to align with the *Learning Standards* once they are completed.

Intervention/Remediation: The state requires all districts to provide remedial services to students who fail any of the reading, writing, and math assessments in the elementary grades. Funds are made available for these purposes, and, according to regulations, the parent or guardian of the student who is to receive remedial help must be notified in writing of the student's test results and of the remedial instruction plan.

North Carolina

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed *North Carolina's Standard Courses of Study* in the four core subject areas. There were no new documents to review this year. The English standards do not have any grade-level benchmarks and, therefore, fail our criterion. The other core subjects are broken down grade by grade for K-8 and course by course in high school. Neither social studies nor science is clear and specific enough to meet our criterion. In fact, the science document simply offers a brief list of concepts and skills with no elaboration or depth. The math standards stand out from the rest. They are clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion.

A state commission is currently developing a plan for putting a new system of standards in place. The most recent report from that commission raises serious questions about the direction of the standards movement in North Carolina. Apparently, the commission is recommending using the English *Course of Study* as a model for new standards in the other subjects. As mentioned above, these standards don't provide any indication of when students should learn what's in the standards. Someone may interpret a particular standard as being relevant in elementary school, while someone else may not think that standard is important until high school. Standards this unclear are not useful at all. The state would be better off using the math *Course of Study* as a model for their future work.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	○
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: North Carolina has recently moved to reduce the amount of tests students are taking. The state assessments are linked to the standards and given to all students in grades 3 through 8 in reading and math and grades 4 and 7 in writing. It is up to local districts to assess in the other core areas. At the high school level, students are given end-of-course exams in English I and II, biology, algebra, U.S. history, and civics. State officials claim that these tests are linked to the *Courses of Study* in each subject, but it is very hard to see how this could be the case in English, where the standards provide no grade-level or course breakdown.

Student Incentives: North Carolina has a *competency test* covering reading and math that students must pass to graduate from high school. The test is first given in 8th grade. Students who pass the test in 8th grade have satisfied that graduation requirement. Those who don't pass it in 8th grade take it again in 10th grade and are given multiple chances to pass it through the 12th grade.

North Carolina is also one of the few states that requires districts to take into account individual student scores on the state assessments when making promotion decisions. It is up to districts to determine how much weight those test scores should be given.

Intervention/Remediation: North Carolina requires schools to provide extra help to those students who do not perform well enough on the assessments in grades 3 through 8, including the exit exam. The state provides the funding, and it is up to schools to determine how to use those funds.

North Dakota

Standards: In our 1995 report, we reviewed North Dakota's *Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core academic subjects. This year, we reviewed the revised version of the English framework. All of these frameworks have been finalized and adopted by the state, but districts are not required to use them.

The standards in each of the subjects are benchmarked to grades 4, 8, and 12. While the math and English frameworks are stronger than the social studies and science frameworks, none of them provides enough detail in terms of the content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion. The new English framework could be improved if it were made clear that the content and skills listed as "examples" are actually part of the standards rather than illustrations.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline ◕ ● Exemplary

Assessments: North Dakota uses commercially developed assessments to test all students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 11 in the core subjects. These assessments are not aligned with the curriculum frameworks.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the state standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Ohio

Standards: For both our 1995 and 1996 reports, we reviewed Ohio's *Model Competency Based Program* in the core subject areas. The standards for all four subjects are grade by grade through 12th grade. Both the math and English standards are clear, detailed, and firmly rooted in content. We consider the math to be an "exemplary" document, worthy of a close look by other states. The science and social studies standards are not nearly as strong as English and math. The science standards overemphasize skills without adequate grounding in content. The social studies standards pay insufficient attention to history content.

According to state officials, curriculum standards in the core subjects from Germany and Japan were analyzed by people developing the state standards.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	●	●
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◐	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Ohio's assessment system is linked to the standards and assesses all students in grades 4, 6, 9, and 12 in the core subject areas.

Student Incentives: The 9th-grade assessments must be taken in the core subjects and passed by all students in order to graduate. Ohio also has a differentiated diploma system, which awards a *Diploma with Honors* to those students who pass the 9th-grade assessments, complete certain courses, maintain a certain grade-point average in those courses, and pass the 12th-grade assessments. There is also an allowance for students who don't pass the 12th-grade assessments to substitute a certain score on the ACT or SAT instead.

Intervention/Remediation: The state requires that each school district provide appropriate intervention services for fifth-graders who fail the 4th-grade assessment in one or more of the core subject areas. According to state officials, the state provides districts with resources to carry this out. There is also a very helpful section on intervention programs in each of the state frameworks.

Oklahoma

Standards: For both our 1995 and 1996 reports, we reviewed Oklahoma's *Priority Academic Student Skills* in the core subjects. Only the math and English standards are clear and specific enough in terms of the content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion. The science and social studies standards tend to emphasize skills and are not firmly grounded in content.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Oklahoma administers both commercial and state-developed assessments. The state-developed assessments are linked to the standards and are given to all students in grades 5, 8, and 11 in the core subject areas.

Student Incentives: There are no student consequences linked to the standards.

Intervention/Remediation: According to state legislation, any student who fails to meet the passing standard on either the commercial or state-developed assessments prior to 8th grade must be "provided with opportunities to receive remediation." However, the state does not provide funds for this and, therefore, does not meet our criterion.

Oregon

Standards: Oregon is in the process of developing standards in the core academic subjects that will serve as the foundation for wide-ranging educational reforms. There were no documents available to review for last year's report. In this year's report, we evaluated the draft *Content Standards and Benchmarks*, which are set at grades 3, 5, 8, 10, and 12. Oregon has also developed two other types of documents: *Common Curriculum Goals*, which are meant to be a comprehensive description of what students should learn from K-12, and *Performance Standards*, which attempt to show how well students need to master the material in the content standards.

The content standards and benchmarks in the core subjects are a good start. While the current drafts are not detailed enough about the content students need to learn to meet our "common core" criterion, the state does plan to flesh out the content under each benchmark and provide that information as part of the standards. That should provide a stronger foundation for the assessments and other elements of Oregon's reform strategy. The state also plans to develop model curricula and other supplementary materials to help schools prepare students to meet the new standards.

Although the content standards need to be improved, it is worth mentioning and praising the Oregon performance standards. These documents define six performance levels for each content standard and attempt to show what those levels mean by including sample test questions and describing the qualities that must be present in student work at each of the levels. Other states are also trying to develop performance standards that define "how good is good enough," but in our judgment, Oregon has taken this idea further than any other state. This is not to say that the Oregon performance standards can't be improved in subsequent drafts. The current draft makes use of mostly assessment questions and *descriptions* of the performance levels. A few student essays are included in the writing section, but it is not made clear which of the six levels of performance those essays represent. The performance standards in each subject could be made clearer to teachers and others if samples of student work at each of the six levels were included.

It is also worth calling attention to another set of standards that will soon be in use in Oregon, this one developed by higher education to serve as admissions requirements to state colleges and universities. The *Proficiency-Based Admissions Standards System* (PASS) is a system

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔
MATH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔
SCIENCE	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◐	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

of standards and assessments that is being built upon the state's K-12 standards and will replace the more traditional system of course requirements. This direct link between the K-12 standards and admission to postsecondary education is not present in most other states but it is a very important connection to forge. The draft PASS academic standards come closer to the level of detail we think is necessary for standards if they are to be of maximum use to teachers, curriculum developers, and others. This is particularly true in math, where the concepts and skills found in the K-12 standards are broken down and elaborated on in the PASS standards to present a clearer picture of what students should know and be able to do.

In the process of developing these various documents, Oregon consulted standards and curriculum materials from Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Canada, England, and Denmark.

Assessments: Oregon is in the process of developing assessments aligned to their standards in the core subjects. These assessments will be given to all students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10.

Student Incentives: The state does not require passage of any assessments for graduation, but students can earn a differentiated diploma by meeting the 10th-grade benchmarks and passing the 10th-grade assessments. Students who do so will earn a "certificate of initial mastery" (CIM). Though state law does not require students to earn a CIM, state officials expect most districts to make this a graduation requirement.

There will also be a higher standard students can aspire to called the "certificate of advanced mastery" (CAM). The CAM will attempt to expand students' academic knowledge while emphasizing ways in which that knowledge can be applied in work-related settings. There will not be any direct stakes attached to the CAM by the state, but the hope is that employers and colleges will begin to encourage or require it. As mentioned above, students will have to meet the PASS standards, which will include passing separate assessments, in order to be eligible for state university admission.

Intervention/Remediation: State law requires districts to provide "alternative learning environments" for students who do not perform adequately on the state assessments at any of the benchmarked grades. Although no special funds are made available for this, the state expects districts to use general state funds for this purpose.

Pennsylvania

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the *Pennsylvania Student Learning Outcomes*. The outcomes covered the core subjects, but they did not provide any grade-level benchmarks and therefore failed our criterion. This year, the state is in the process of replacing the outcomes with standards that will have grade-level benchmarks. There were no drafts available to review for this report.

Pennsylvania has also developed curriculum frameworks in English, math, and science (the state is not developing a social studies framework). These frameworks are not required to be used by districts or schools and it is unclear how they will relate to the new standards currently being developed. Nevertheless, we thought it appropriate to review those frameworks that were available as well as the *Learning Outcomes* for this report.

Only the math and English frameworks were available for us to look at, and they are quite different from one another. The math framework takes the broad *Learning Outcomes* mentioned above and elaborates on what students should learn in each of four grade clusters. The English framework, on the other hand, does not relate to the state *Learning Outcomes*, and though it discusses teaching and learning in different grade clusters, it doesn't contain much in the way of "standards." The English framework does not meet our "common core" criterion. The math framework is stronger than English by virtue of expanding on the state outcomes, but the document specifically states that these benchmark indicators are only *illustrative* in nature—they are not standards that students will be expected to meet—so they do not satisfy our "common core" criterion.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	◔
MATH	○	◔
SCIENCE	○	○
SOCIAL STUDIES	○	○

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: The state assesses all students in grades 5, 8, and 11 in reading and math and in grades 6 and 9 in writing. According to state officials, these assessments will be aligned with the new standards once they are completed, and new assessments aligned to the science and social studies standards will also be developed.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the state standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Rhode Island

Standards: In our 1995 report, we reviewed the draft *Mathematics Framework*, which was not clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion. For this year's report, we reviewed the final (approved) versions of the math and science frameworks and a draft of the English framework. Rhode Island does not plan to develop a framework for social studies.

The format and quality of each subject framework is different. The English framework is the weakest of the three. There is very little emphasis on content and it provides no grade-level benchmarks to indicate *when* students should be learning what's in the framework. The math framework may have improved slightly from last year, but it is still not detailed and comprehensive enough to meet our "common core" criterion. The science document is the strongest of the three but it could be improved as well. It is organized by K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade clusters and includes a significant amount of science content. What's lacking is attention to what students should be able to *do* with the content. We consider the science framework a "borderline" document that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers, parents, and others in the future.

According to state officials, standards-setters looked at materials from Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands when developing their science and math frameworks.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	○
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◐
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	

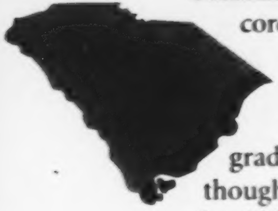
Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◐ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Rhode Island has both commercial and state-developed assessments, which are given to all students in English and math. According to state officials, some of these assessments are aligned with the frameworks. The state would like to develop science assessments, but there is not adequate funding. There are no plans to develop social studies assessments.

Student Incentives: The state does not have high school exit exams or other incentives for students to meet the standards. There is an effort under way, however, to develop standards and assessments for a "certificate of initial mastery" (CIM) that students can earn in high school. Steps are being taken to link this certificate to the state frameworks. It will be up to each individual district to decide whether to make the opportunity to earn the CIM available to their students—it will not be mandated by the state.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

South Carolina



Standards: South Carolina is in the process of developing curriculum frameworks in the core academic subjects. For our 1995 report, only the math framework was available for review. This year, we reviewed the draft English and science frameworks; social studies will not be available until later this year.

The math and science frameworks are broken down into pre-K-3, 3-6, 6-9, and 9-12 grade clusters. Both are clear and specific enough to meet our "common core" criterion, although the science framework does a more thorough job of identifying the content students should learn. The English framework is organized by K-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade clusters, and it is noticeably different from math and science. It pays considerably less attention to content and some standards are simply repeated from cluster to cluster with little indication of development or progression. South Carolina has also developed *Academic Achievement Standards* in English which complement the framework. Although these *Achievement Standards* are clearer and more useful than the standards in the framework, they are not grounded in enough content to meet our criterion. For example, the standards mention the word "literature," but provide very little information on the quality and content of the literature students should read.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: South Carolina uses both commercial and state-developed assessments in math, reading, writing, and science at a variety of grade levels. According to state officials, these assessments will be aligned with the frameworks once they are completed. There is discussion of developing social studies assessments in the future, but plans are not definite at this time.

Student Incentives: According to state law, student promotion decisions must be partly based on students' performance on the state reading and math assessments. Students are also required to pass a 10th-grade "minimum competency" exam in math, science, reading, and writing in order to graduate. The exit exam is not currently linked to the standards, though officials say they are planning to develop new exit assessments aligned with the 10th-grade standards in the frameworks.

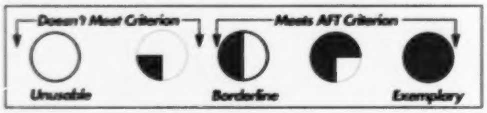
Intervention/Remediation: Districts in South Carolina are required to provide remediation for those students who fail the high school exit exam. According to state officials, funds are provided for this.

South Dakota

Standards: In our 1995 report, we reviewed South Dakota's draft *Mathematics and Science Benchmarks*. These were not strong enough to meet our "common core" criterion. This year, we reviewed a new draft of the math and science standards as well as drafts in English and social studies. Each of the subjects is organized into K-2, 3-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters, but the standards are quite vague and none of the subjects is firmly rooted in academic content. For example, though the social studies standards require students to learn about "history," there is scarcely a mention of learning any American history. None of the subjects is clear and content based enough to meet our criterion.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	◔



Assessments: South Dakota has no state-developed assessments. Instead, the state mandates that districts give their students commercially developed assessments in grades 4, 8, and 11 in the four core subjects. These assessments are not aligned with South Dakota's standards. State officials say they are in the process of "customizing" the assessments to provide a better fit with the standards, but given that these are nationally standardized, commercially produced tests, it is hard to see how this can be worked out.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Tennessee

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the Tennessee *Comprehensive Curriculum Guide*, which provides grade-by-grade standards for grades K-8 in the core subjects. There were separate documents for grades 9-12. This year, we reviewed a new draft social studies framework, which is meant to replace both of the old frameworks.

All of the core subjects passed our "common core" criterion last year, though the K-8 standards were stronger than those at the high school level. This contrast was particularly evident in English, where the 9-12 framework provided very little guidance as to the content students should learn. Because the high school segment is so weak, we consider the Tennessee English standards a "borderline" case that will need to be significantly strengthened to be of maximum value to teachers and others in the future.

The math and science standards meet our "common core" criterion this year as they did last year. The new social studies framework also satisfies our criterion, though it changed from a K-8 grade-by-grade format to K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 grade clusters. This change makes the elementary and middle school standards less specific and harder for teachers at all grade levels to use, but it doesn't appear that too much content was lost. Instead, the content is condensed into these clusters. The high school standards continue to be in a course-by-course format.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◐	◐
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕

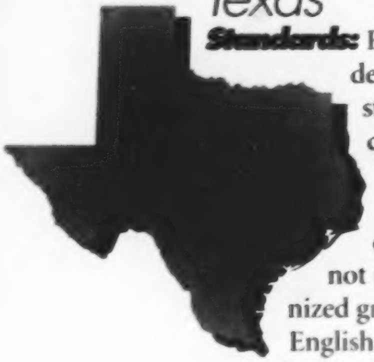
Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔ — Meets AFT Criterion: ◐ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Tennessee currently has state assessments linked to the standards in the core academic subjects. These tests are given to all students every year in grades 2-8. The state is also in the process of developing high school assessments that will be aligned with the frameworks in the core subjects. At this point, only math is complete.

Student Incentives: Students have to pass a "minimum competency" exit exam covering English and math in order to graduate. Students first take the test in 9th grade and they have multiple chances to pass. According to state officials, the exit exam is linked to the 8th-grade state standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Texas



Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the *Administrative Code Curriculum*, which describes the standards students should meet in the core subject areas. These standards were broken down grade by grade through middle school and course by course in high school. They were highly detailed, and all four subjects met our "common core" criterion.

The state is currently in the process of developing a new set of standards—called *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills*—meant to complement, not replace, the existing *Code*. The math and social studies standards are organized grade by grade through 8th grade, then course by course in high school. English and science are organized into grade clusters. All four subjects meet our "common core" criterion, although the K-8 science standards could be strengthened by paying more attention to content.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕

Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: Texas has assessments linked to the *Administrative Code* standards in the core subjects. All students currently take English and math assessments in grades 3 through 8 and 10; social studies and science is assessed in the 8th grade. Texas is also in the process of developing and implementing end-of-course exams in high school. These are currently given in algebra and biology; U.S. history and English will be added within the next few years. The state will not require students to take these end-of-course assessments. However, if a district requires the course, then the state-developed exam must be administered.

Student Incentives: Texas has an exit exam that covers English and math and is taken by all 10th graders. The exam is based on the state's 8th-grade standards and students must pass it in order to graduate. Texas also has an advanced diploma students can achieve by taking certain courses and earning certain grades in those courses, but since that diploma is not directly linked to *both* the state standards and assessments, it doesn't meet our "differentiated diploma" criterion.

Intervention/Remediation: Texas requires districts to provide remedial help to students who fail any part of the state exit exam. According to state officials, the state provides funding for this.

Utah

Standards: In our 1995 and 1996 reports, we reviewed the *Utah Core Curriculum* in the core academic subjects. The standards are broken down grade by grade and are very specific about what should be learned. At the high school level, the standards are written course by course, and the state has a specified core of courses all students must take.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◕	◕
MATH	◕	◕
SCIENCE	◕	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	◕	◕

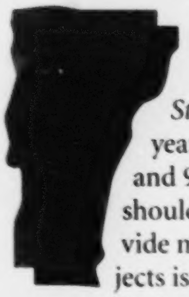
Doesn't Meet Criterion		Meets AFT Criterion		
○	◔	◑	◕	●
Unusable		Borderline		Exemplary

Assessments: The Utah state assessment system has multiple elements. Some of these are commercially developed, others are developed by the state. The state-developed assessments are aligned with the standards and given to students every year from kindergarten through 8th grade and also in certain courses in high school. Though these assessments are voluntary for districts, state officials report that every district except one uses them.

Student Incentives: None that are linked to the standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Vermont



Standards: In last year's report, we reviewed the draft content standards in *Vermont's Common Core Framework*. Those standards were not very well grounded in content and failed to provide grade levels or benchmarks to indicate by what age or grade students should meet the standards.

We looked at newer drafts of the framework this year (renamed *Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*). While this document goes further than last year's draft by showing what's expected of students in particular grade clusters (K-4, 5-8, and 9-12), the standards are still not thorough enough in terms of the content students should learn to lead to a common core curriculum across the state. Math and science provide more elaboration in this respect than English and social studies, but none of the subjects is strong enough to meet our criterion. Vermont has recently produced a final version of its frameworks, but these were not available in time to review for this report.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	◔
MATH	○	◔
SCIENCE	○	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	○	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: School districts in Vermont have complete autonomy in terms of standards and student assessment. Though the state has developed or is in the process of developing assessments linked to their standards in math, writing, and science, districts are not required to use them. Some choose to use the state assessments, others do not. The state also uses commercially developed exams (the *New Standards Project Reference Exams*) that state officials claim are aligned with their standards.

Student Incentives: There are no state-initiated incentives for students to meet the standards.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

Virginia

Standards: In last year's report, we reviewed drafts of *Virginia's Standards of Learning* in English, science, and mathematics. In this year's report, we have reviewed the adopted versions of the standards in all four core subjects.

All of Virginia's standards are presented in grade-by-grade format at least through elementary school. The history/social science and English standards continue grade by grade through 12th grade; the math standards are grade by grade until high school, at which point the standards are arranged course by course; and the science standards are grade by grade through 6th grade when the format shifts to course by course.

Virginia's standards are extraordinarily clear and well grounded in content. Their grade-by-grade and course-by-course structure ensures that they will be useful to teachers and other school staff regardless of the grade or subject they are involved in. And unlike some other standards that provide a lot of detail, Virginia's standards are not too voluminous or overwhelming. They reflect some tough choices about what is most important for students to learn, rather than trying to cover everything. It is because of this combination of clarity, detail, content, and precision that we consider Virginia's standards "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states.

It should be noted, however, that the course-by-course structure in math and science makes it less clear than in the other subjects what *all* students are expected to learn. According to state officials, this will be clarified through the assessment system currently being developed. The state will require that all 11th graders take tests linked to the high school standards in algebra, geometry, earth science, and biology, thus ensuring that all students have learned the material covered in the standards for these courses.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	●	●
MATH	●	●
SCIENCE	●	●
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	●

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline ◕ ● Exemplary

Assessments: Virginia currently uses both commercial and state-developed assessments, none of which are aligned with their standards. The state is in the process of developing a new assessment system, which will test all students at grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 and will be aligned with the *Standards of Learning* in all of the core subjects.

Student Incentives: Virginia has a high-stakes exam that students take for the first time in 6th grade, called the *Literacy Passport Test*. The test is designed to measure 6th-grade proficiency in math, reading, and writing, but it is based on a previous set of state standards, not the recently adopted *Standards of Learning*. Students who fail to pass this exam by the end of the 8th grade may go on to 9th grade, but they are not allowed to participate in high school extracurricular activities until they pass the test.

The *Literacy Passport Test* also functions as an exit exam in that all students must eventually pass it in order to graduate. *Of all the states with high school graduation assessments, Virginia's are currently pegged to the lowest grade-level standard.* According to state officials, Virginia is considering shifting the graduation requirement from passage of the 6th-grade test to passage of 11th-grade assessments in the future. A final decision had not been made at the time of this report.

Virginia high school students can earn an advanced diploma by taking certain courses and earning certain grades in those courses. However, since that diploma is not directly linked to *both* the state standards and assessments, it does not meet our "differentiated diploma" criterion.

Intervention/Remediation: According to state officials, Virginia requires local school boards to provide extra help to students in danger of not meeting the *Standards of Learning* or who have not or may not pass the *Literacy Passport Test*. The state provides funds for this intervention.

Washington

Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the draft *Essential Learnings* in the core subjects. These documents offered standards at three "benchmark" levels, but they provided no indication of *when* students should learn the material at each level. Therefore, while the content was fairly strong in certain subjects, the *Essential Learnings* failed our "common core" criterion.

This year, we reviewed newer drafts of these documents, each of which now has grade levels associated with the "benchmarks." The *Essential Learnings* are organized around what students should learn by the 4th, 7th, and 10th grades, the years in which assessments are given. The English and science standards are clearly written and well grounded in content. They are both strong enough to meet our "common core" criterion. The math and social studies standards, on the other hand, are not. The math standards contain some explicit language, but in some cases the standards are very similar or exactly the same in the 7th and 10th grades. Such standards need to provide greater elaboration and differentiation to be clear and useful—what progress should students be making in that three-year period? The social studies standards do not provide enough detail in terms of the historical content students should learn to meet our criterion. Although there is a separate "history" section within the social studies standards, and various periods of history are listed, there is no attempt to define which events, figures, or issues within those eras are most important for students to understand.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	◕
MATH	○	◔
SCIENCE	○	◕
SOCIAL STUDIES	○	◔

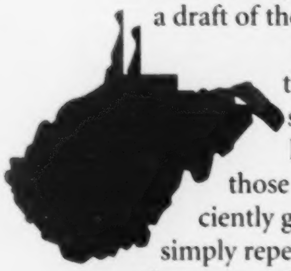
Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Washington is developing an assessment system to measure student progress toward achieving the *Essential Learnings*. These assessments will be aligned with the standards in the core subjects and will be given to students in grades 4, 7, and 10.

Student Incentives: According to state officials, students will have to pass the 10th-grade assessments in the core subjects in order to graduate.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

West Virginia



Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the *Instructional Goals and Objectives* in the four core subjects. The state is in the process of significantly revising these standards, but only a draft of the new math document was available to review for this report.

Of the West Virginia standards we reviewed last year, math was the only one to thoroughly meet our "common core" criterion. Both the social studies and science standards met our criterion, but only by a narrow margin. The science standards listed a lot of concepts, but there was not enough elaboration as to what about those concepts students should understand. The social studies standards were insufficiently grounded in the content of history and civics. In English, the same standards were simply repeated at the elementary, middle, and high school levels with no differentiation whatsoever. This makes the standards virtually impossible to use.

The new West Virginia math standards are organized grade by grade from grades K-8, and then course by course in high school. They are very clear and well grounded in content, and they represent a significant improvement over the older *Instructional Goals and Objectives.* We consider the new West Virginia math standards an "exemplary" document that other states should look to as a model. The English, science, and social studies standards have not yet been revised.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT
MATH	◕	●
SCIENCE	◑	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT
SOCIAL STUDIES	◑	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT

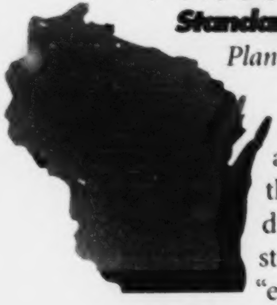
Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔
Meets AFT Criterion: ◑ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: West Virginia currently uses both commercial and state-developed assessments. Assessments aligned with the standards are given to students in grades 1 through 8 in reading and math and in grades 8 and 10 in writing. The state is currently developing new assessments which will measure student achievement of the new standards in each of the core subjects.

Student Incentives: While there is no exit exam that all high school students must pass to graduate, only students who meet a minimal level of proficiency on the state assessments can earn a "warranty" with their diploma. This form of differentiated diploma provides recognition for those students who work hard and meet the state standards.

Intervention/Remediation: State accreditation policy requires schools to develop "improvement plans" for any student not demonstrating a minimal level of proficiency on the state assessments, but no state funds are provided for this.

Wisconsin



Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the Wisconsin *Guides to Curriculum Planning* in all four core subjects. Although the *Guides* contain references to what student should learn in each subject, they are intended to provide ideas and guidance for local curriculum development—they are not linked to the state assessments and are not considered "standards." Therefore, even though the content in some of the *Guides* is quite clear and detailed—math is the strongest in this regard—they did not meet our "common core" criterion last year because they lacked explicit standards that all students are expected to meet. Put another way, the *Guides* provide "examples" of what students *could* learn, rather than clear statements of what they *should* learn.

While the curriculum *Guides* are not considered state standards, Wisconsin is in the process of developing documents in the core subjects that *will* define what all students are expected to learn. No drafts of these standards were available for review in this report.

What was available for review this year that we were not aware of last year is a set of *Content Guidelines* in the core subjects. These *Guidelines* describe what is covered on the state assessments, and according to state officials, they are intended to be used with the curriculum *Guides* discussed earlier. The social studies *Guidelines* are much clearer and easier to understand than the other core subjects, because only social studies provides descriptions of what students should learn at various benchmark grades. The English, math, and science *Guidelines* provide only general standards with no indication as to when students should meet them. Even though they contains grade clusters, the social studies *Guidelines* are not clear enough about the content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion. Although one of the sections has to do with "time, continuity and change," the standards provide very little information about the actual historical content students should learn. There is no reference, for example, to understanding the causes and consequences of the American Revolution, the Civil War, or any other event or period of American history.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	◔	◔
MATH	◔	◔
SCIENCE	◔	◔
SOCIAL STUDIES	◔	◔

Doesn't Meet Criterion: ○ Unusable, ◔

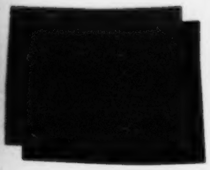
Meets AFT Criterion: ◐ Borderline, ◕, ● Exemplary

Assessments: Wisconsin uses both commercial and state-developed assessments. The state-developed tests are linked to the *Guidelines* mentioned earlier and are given to all students in grades 4, 8, and 10 in the core subject areas. Upon completion of the standards currently under development, the assessments will be revised to align with the new standards.

Student Incentives: The state currently has no student incentives linked to its standards. However, a differentiated diploma system is being considered.

Intervention/Remediation: Wisconsin requires districts to provide remediation to elementary students who aren't performing well in reading. This intervention requirement is not currently tied to any state standards, but beginning with the 1997/98 school year, it will be. The state offers technical assistance to districts, but there is no separate funding for remediation.

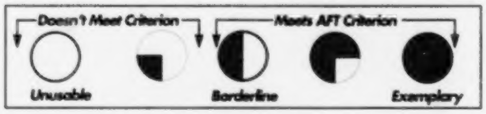
Wyoming



Standards: Wyoming has no officially sanctioned state standards, but the state will require districts to develop their own. According to state officials, work is under way to develop model standards in the core subject areas to guide districts in their efforts. No drafts were available to review for this report.

AFT "Common Core" Criterion

	1995 REPORT	1996 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	
MATH	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	
SCIENCE	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW	

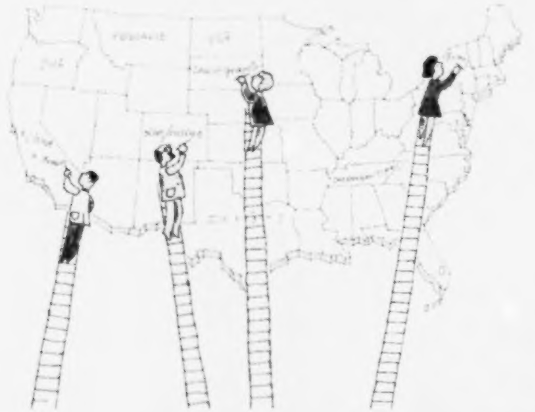

Doesn't Meet Criterion
Meets AFT Criterion
Unusable
Borderline
Exemplary

Assessments: There are no statewide assessments in Wyoming.

Student Incentives: None.

Intervention/Remediation: None required.

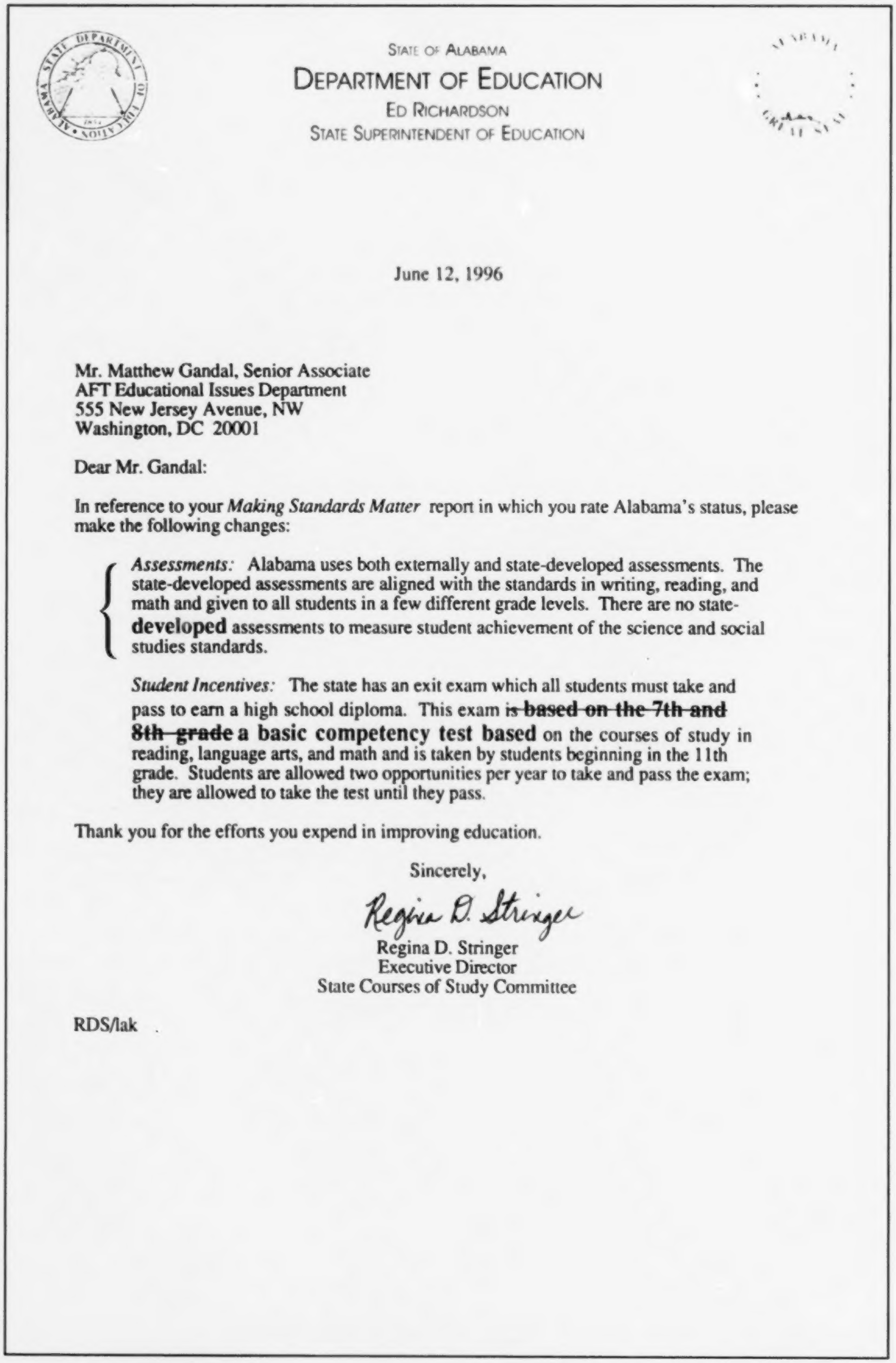
V. State Responses



As an accuracy check and a courtesy to states, we sent our draft findings to each state superintendent and deputy superintendent one month in advance of our publication deadline. We asked them to tell us if there were any inaccuracies or inconsistencies so that we could make the necessary changes. We also offered to publish their responses in our report. This section contains those responses. In order to show which of the state concerns and requests led to changes in this report, we have placed a "/" symbol next to the corresponding text in the letters.

Alabama / Page 98
Arkansas / Page 99
California / Page 100
Hawaii / Page 101
Idaho / Page 102
Indiana / Page 103
Kentucky / Page 106
Maryland / Page 109
Massachusetts / Page 110
Michigan / Page 112
Missouri / Page 114
Montana / Page 116
New Jersey / Page 117
Oklahoma / Page 119
Oregon / Page 120
Rhode Island / Page 121
South Carolina / Page 123
South Dakota / Page 125
Vermont / Page 126
Washington / Page 128
West Virginia / Page 130
Wisconsin / Page 132

In addition to these 22 states, 14 others responded either verbally or in writing, but their responses were not publishable.



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ED RICHARDSON
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

June 12, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal, Senior Associate
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

In reference to your *Making Standards Matter* report in which you rate Alabama's status, please make the following changes:

Assessments: Alabama uses both externally and state-developed assessments. The state-developed assessments are aligned with the standards in writing, reading, and math and given to all students in a few different grade levels. There are no state-**developed** assessments to measure student achievement of the science and social studies standards.

Student Incentives: The state has an exit exam which all students must take and pass to earn a high school diploma. This exam ~~is based on the 7th and 8th grade~~ **a basic competency test based** on the courses of study in reading, language arts, and math and is taken by students beginning in the 11th grade. Students are allowed two opportunities per year to take and pass the exam; they are allowed to take the test until they pass.

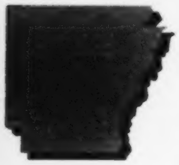
Thank you for the efforts you expend in improving education.

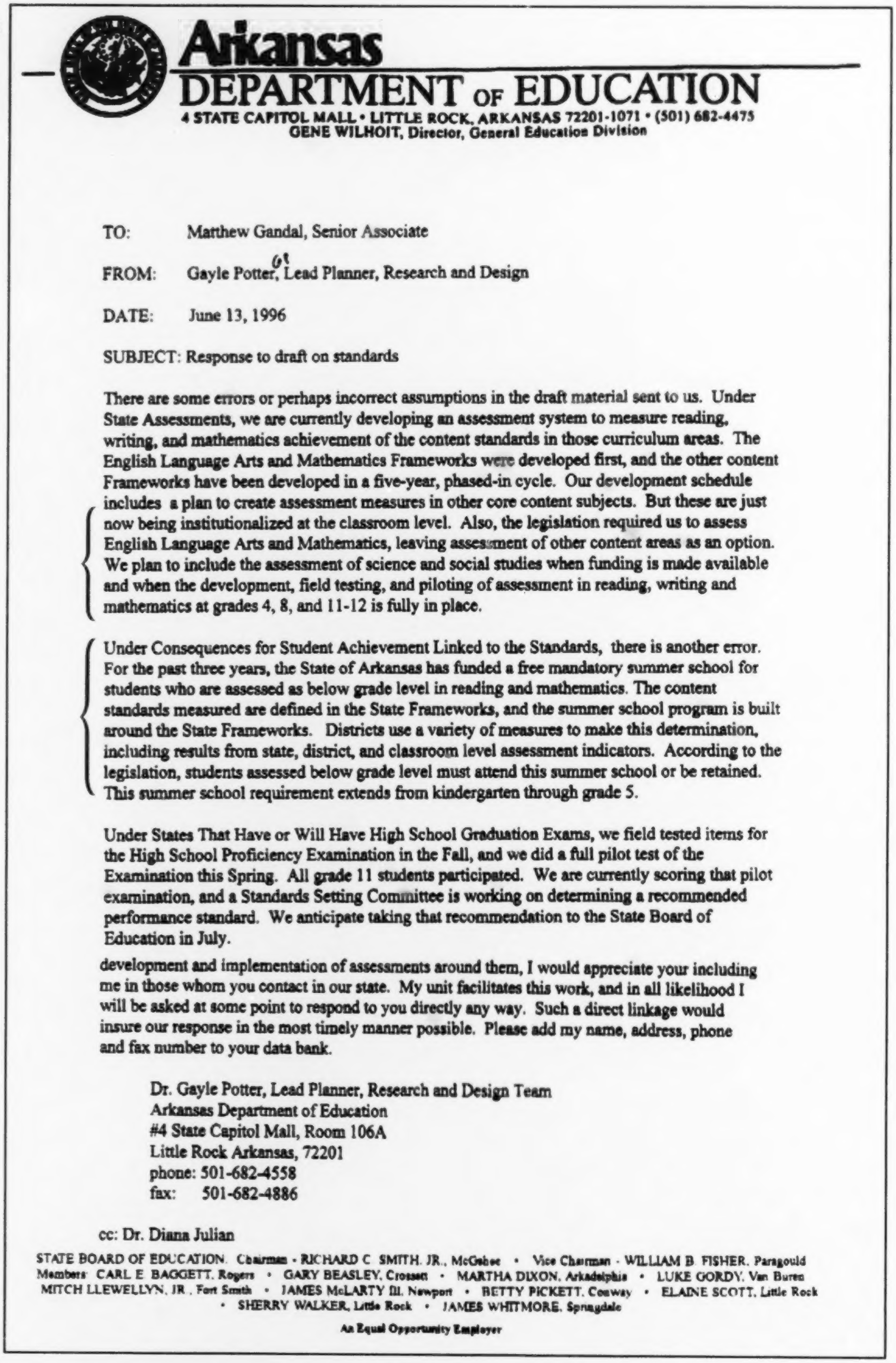
Sincerely,

Regina D. Stringer

Regina D. Stringer
Executive Director
State Courses of Study Committee

RDS/lak





Arkansas
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
4 STATE CAPITOL MALL • LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201-1071 • (501) 682-4475
GENE WILHOIT, Director, General Education Division

TO: Matthew Gandal, Senior Associate

FROM: Gayle Potter, Lead Planner, Research and Design

DATE: June 13, 1996

SUBJECT: Response to draft on standards

There are some errors or perhaps incorrect assumptions in the draft material sent to us. Under State Assessments, we are currently developing an assessment system to measure reading, writing, and mathematics achievement of the content standards in those curriculum areas. The English Language Arts and Mathematics Frameworks were developed first, and the other content Frameworks have been developed in a five-year, phased-in cycle. Our development schedule includes a plan to create assessment measures in other core content subjects. But these are just now being institutionalized at the classroom level. Also, the legislation required us to assess English Language Arts and Mathematics, leaving assessment of other content areas as an option. We plan to include the assessment of science and social studies when funding is made available and when the development, field testing, and piloting of assessment in reading, writing and mathematics at grades 4, 8, and 11-12 is fully in place.

Under Consequences for Student Achievement Linked to the Standards, there is another error. For the past three years, the State of Arkansas has funded a free mandatory summer school for students who are assessed as below grade level in reading and mathematics. The content standards measured are defined in the State Frameworks, and the summer school program is built around the State Frameworks. Districts use a variety of measures to make this determination, including results from state, district, and classroom level assessment indicators. According to the legislation, students assessed below grade level must attend this summer school or be retained. This summer school requirement extends from kindergarten through grade 5.

Under States That Have or Will Have High School Graduation Exams, we field tested items for the High School Proficiency Examination in the Fall, and we did a full pilot test of the Examination this Spring. All grade 11 students participated. We are currently scoring that pilot examination, and a Standards Setting Committee is working on determining a recommended performance standard. We anticipate taking that recommendation to the State Board of Education in July.

development and implementation of assessments around them, I would appreciate your including me in those whom you contact in our state. My unit facilitates this work, and in all likelihood I will be asked at some point to respond to you directly any way. Such a direct linkage would insure our response in the most timely manner possible. Please add my name, address, phone and fax number to your data bank.

Dr. Gayle Potter, Lead Planner, Research and Design Team
Arkansas Department of Education
#4 State Capitol Mall, Room 106A
Little Rock Arkansas, 72201
phone: 501-682-4558
fax: 501-682-4886

cc: Dr. Diana Julian

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION: Chairman - RICHARD C. SMITH, JR., McGehee • Vice Chairman - WILLIAM B. FISHER, Paragould
Members: CARL E. BAGGETT, Rogers • GARY BEASLEY, Crossett • MARTHA DIXON, Arkadelphia • LUKE GORDY, Van Buren
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• SHERRY WALKER, Little Rock • JAMES WHITMORE, Springdale
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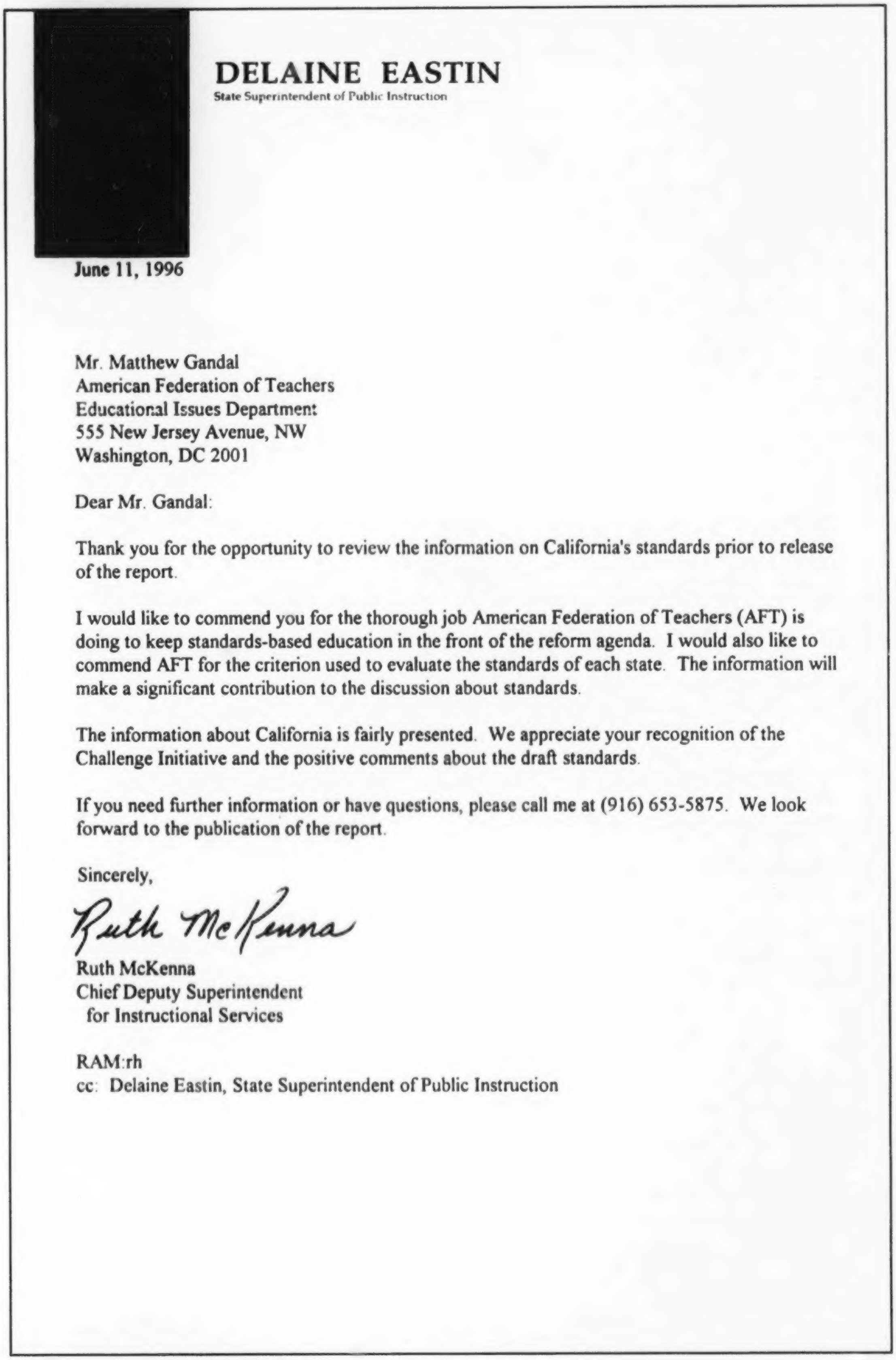


DELAINE EASTIN
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

June 11, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal
American Federation of Teachers
Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 2001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the information on California's standards prior to release of the report.

I would like to commend you for the thorough job American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is doing to keep standards-based education in the front of the reform agenda. I would also like to commend AFT for the criterion used to evaluate the standards of each state. The information will make a significant contribution to the discussion about standards.

The information about California is fairly presented. We appreciate your recognition of the Challenge Initiative and the positive comments about the draft standards.

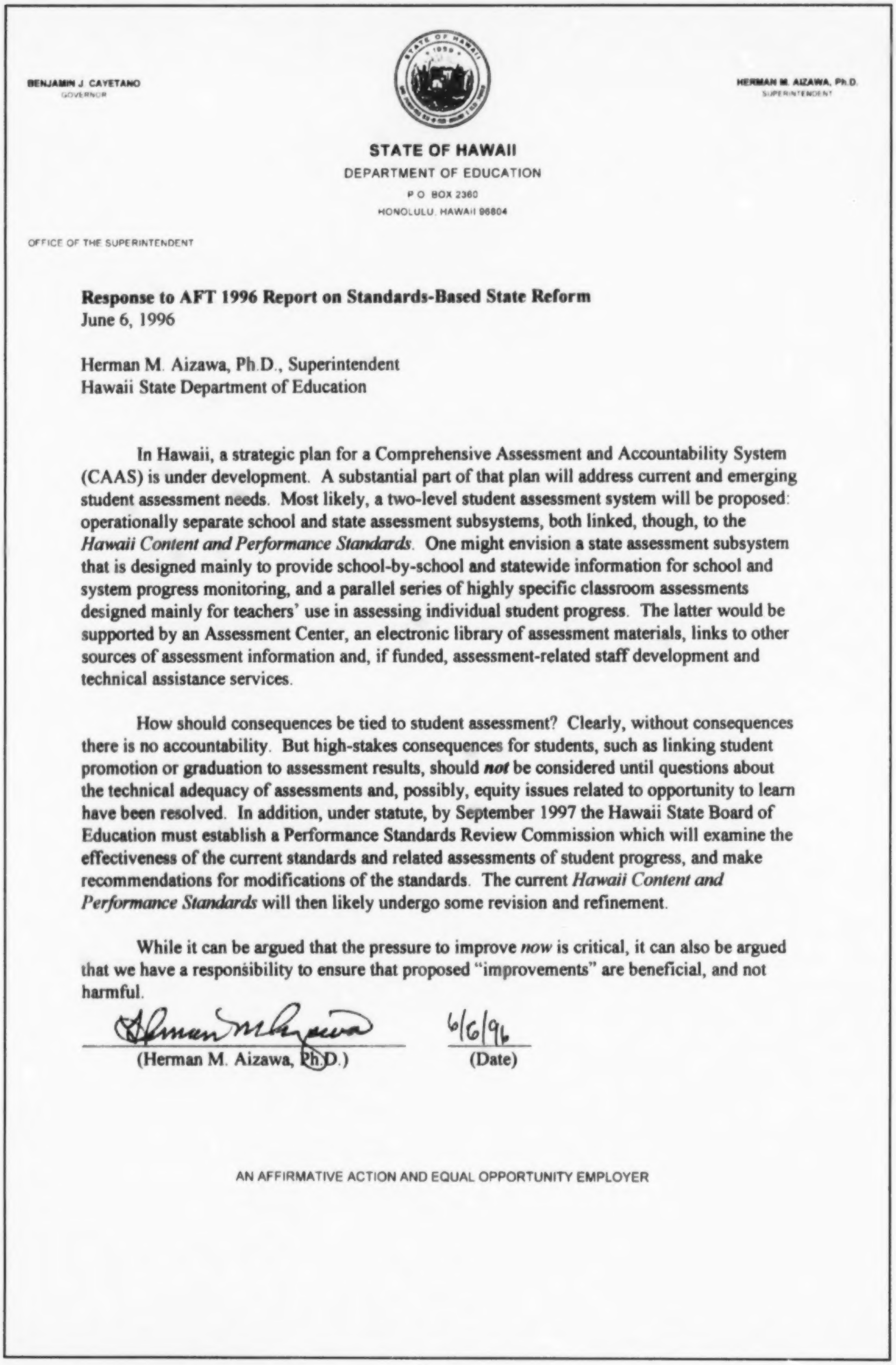
If you need further information or have questions, please call me at (916) 653-5875. We look forward to the publication of the report.

Sincerely,

Ruth McKenna

Ruth McKenna
Chief Deputy Superintendent
for Instructional Services

RAM:rh
cc: Delaine Eastin, State Superintendent of Public Instruction



BENJAMIN J. CAYETANO
GOVERNOR

HERMAN M. AIZAWA, Ph.D.
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P O BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Response to AFT 1996 Report on Standards-Based State Reform
June 6, 1996

Herman M. Aizawa, Ph.D., Superintendent
Hawaii State Department of Education

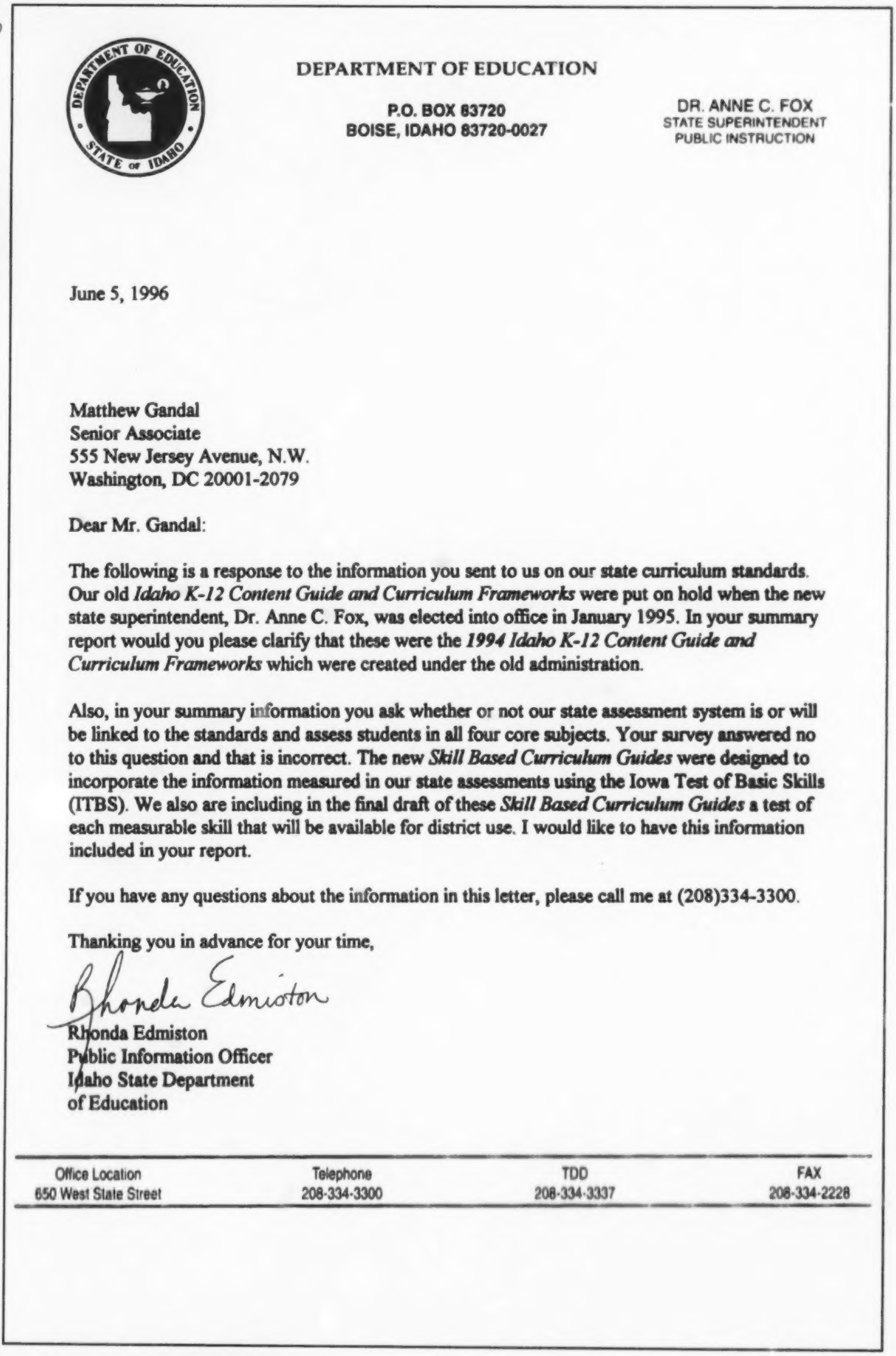
In Hawaii, a strategic plan for a Comprehensive Assessment and Accountability System (CAAS) is under development. A substantial part of that plan will address current and emerging student assessment needs. Most likely, a two-level student assessment system will be proposed: operationally separate school and state assessment subsystems, both linked, though, to the *Hawaii Content and Performance Standards*. One might envision a state assessment subsystem that is designed mainly to provide school-by-school and statewide information for school and system progress monitoring, and a parallel series of highly specific classroom assessments designed mainly for teachers' use in assessing individual student progress. The latter would be supported by an Assessment Center, an electronic library of assessment materials, links to other sources of assessment information and, if funded, assessment-related staff development and technical assistance services.

How should consequences be tied to student assessment? Clearly, without consequences there is no accountability. But high-stakes consequences for students, such as linking student promotion or graduation to assessment results, should ***not*** be considered until questions about the technical adequacy of assessments and, possibly, equity issues related to opportunity to learn have been resolved. In addition, under statute, by September 1997 the Hawaii State Board of Education must establish a Performance Standards Review Commission which will examine the effectiveness of the current standards and related assessments of student progress, and make recommendations for modifications of the standards. The current *Hawaii Content and Performance Standards* will then likely undergo some revision and refinement.

While it can be argued that the pressure to improve *now* is critical, it can also be argued that we have a responsibility to ensure that proposed "improvements" are beneficial, and not harmful.

Herman M Aizawa 6/6/96
(Herman M. Aizawa, Ph.D.) (Date)

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0027

DR. ANNE C. FOX
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

June 5, 1996

Matthew Gandal
Senior Associate
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

The following is a response to the information you sent to us on our state curriculum standards. Our old *Idaho K-12 Content Guide and Curriculum Frameworks* were put on hold when the new state superintendent, Dr. Anne C. Fox, was elected into office in January 1995. In your summary report would you please clarify that these were the *1994 Idaho K-12 Content Guide and Curriculum Frameworks* which were created under the old administration.

Also, in your summary information you ask whether or not our state assessment system is or will be linked to the standards and assess students in all four core subjects. Your survey answered no to this question and that is incorrect. The new *Skill Based Curriculum Guides* were designed to incorporate the information measured in our state assessments using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). We also are including in the final draft of these *Skill Based Curriculum Guides* a test of each measurable skill that will be available for district use. I would like to have this information included in your report.

If you have any questions about the information in this letter, please call me at (208)334-3300.

Thanking you in advance for your time,

Rhonda Edmiston

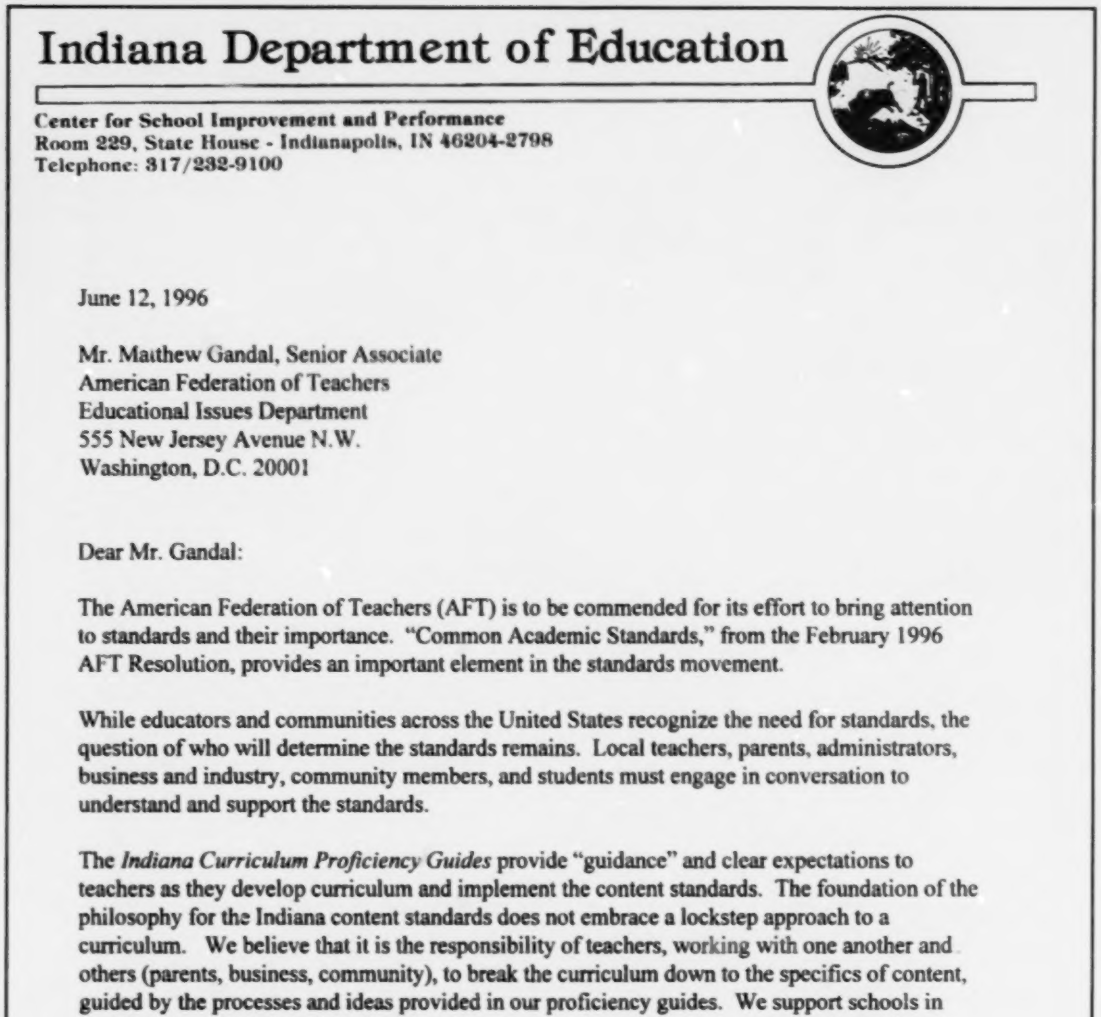
Rhonda Edmiston
Public Information Officer
Idaho State Department
of Education

Office Location
650 West State Street

Telephone
208-334-3300

TDD
208-334-3337

FAX
208-334-2228



Indiana Department of Education

Center for School Improvement and Performance
Room 229, State House - Indianapolis, IN 46204-2798
Telephone: 317/232-9100

June 12, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal, Senior Associate
American Federation of Teachers
Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is to be commended for its effort to bring attention to standards and their importance. "Common Academic Standards," from the February 1996 AFT Resolution, provides an important element in the standards movement.

While educators and communities across the United States recognize the need for standards, the question of who will determine the standards remains. Local teachers, parents, administrators, business and industry, community members, and students must engage in conversation to understand and support the standards.

The *Indiana Curriculum Proficiency Guides* provide "guidance" and clear expectations to teachers as they develop curriculum and implement the content standards. The foundation of the philosophy for the Indiana content standards does not embrace a lockstep approach to a curriculum. We believe that it is the responsibility of teachers, working with one another and others (parents, business, community), to break the curriculum down to the specifics of content, guided by the processes and ideas provided in our proficiency guides. We support schools in working through their beliefs about learning, students, instruction, assessment and creating the working curriculum that fulfills all of the expectations expressed in the *Indiana Curriculum Proficiency Guides*.

Office Location - Two Market Square Center - 251 East Ohio Street

The *Indiana Curriculum Proficiency Guides* state the achievement expectations for Indiana students. Additional material, recently sent to you, supplements or replaces existing Guides. We describe this material here:

1. *Indiana Social Studies Proficiency Guide--An Aid to Curriculum Development* (a draft for statewide review; expect final copy mid-July).

    This Guide addresses specific content standards in each grade for Grades K-8. It also contains specific content standards for the following high school courses: Economics, Psychology, Sociology, United States Government, United States History, and World Geography. Civics and World History are near completion. National standards were reviewed by the proficiency guide developers. They do not, however, dictate the standards contained in this Guide.

2. Mathematics and English/Language Arts Proficiency Content Standards for Grades 3, 6, 8, and 10.

    These content standards are the basis for the statewide assessment program and state specifically what students are expected to know and be able to do at these grade levels. These content standards reflect grade specific expectations and are communicated to all Indiana teachers to guide them in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

3. Competency statements for the following high school courses:

    Science: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Earth/Space Science
    Mathematics: Mathematical Problem-Solving, Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Trigonometry and Pre-Calculus, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, and Calculus.

    High school and university faculty developed these competency statements to specifically identify what a student should know and be able to do at the conclusion of these courses. English competencies are nearing final form. This development effort is part of **Indiana's Core 40 Program** -- a core curriculum flowing from a joint resolution by the Indiana State Board of Education and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. The Core 40 Program identifies courses all students are expected to take. Each student, by the end of Grade 9, must create a career and course plan that includes 26 specific challenging courses and 14 elective courses of academic rigor and substance.

The recent AFT review does not reflect the Social Studies standards described above. , The draft copy, while close to final form, clearly meets the highest expectations of quality standards.

Indiana is in the process of revising its Proficiency Guides (content standards) in the areas of English, mathematics, and science. The Core 40 Competencies (above) provide both specific and substantial content. These documents address AFT's recent comment about the Indiana Mathematics Proficiency Guide, namely, "the content is least clear in high school."

The addition of these materials for your review will address your "Subject by Subject Standards Analysis."

A Differentiated Diploma Linked to the Standards

The Indiana Academic Honors Diploma, the purpose of which is to encourage and reward students who pursue a rigorous, advanced course of study during their high school years. Earning this diploma requires a student to take at least 9 credits above the 38 required for graduation, for a total of 47 credits. It is understood that he courses selected by the students will be those courses that are academically challenging. A grade point average of "B" or above, with no grade below a "C," to qualify. This differentiated diploma was initiated in 1988.

High School Graduation Exams

"High School Graduation Exams," when focused on **four core subject areas**, is not accurate in the column entitled "The state is developing graduation exams . . . " Indiana's statewide test initially will include only Mathematics and English/Language Arts. Science and Social Studies may be added.

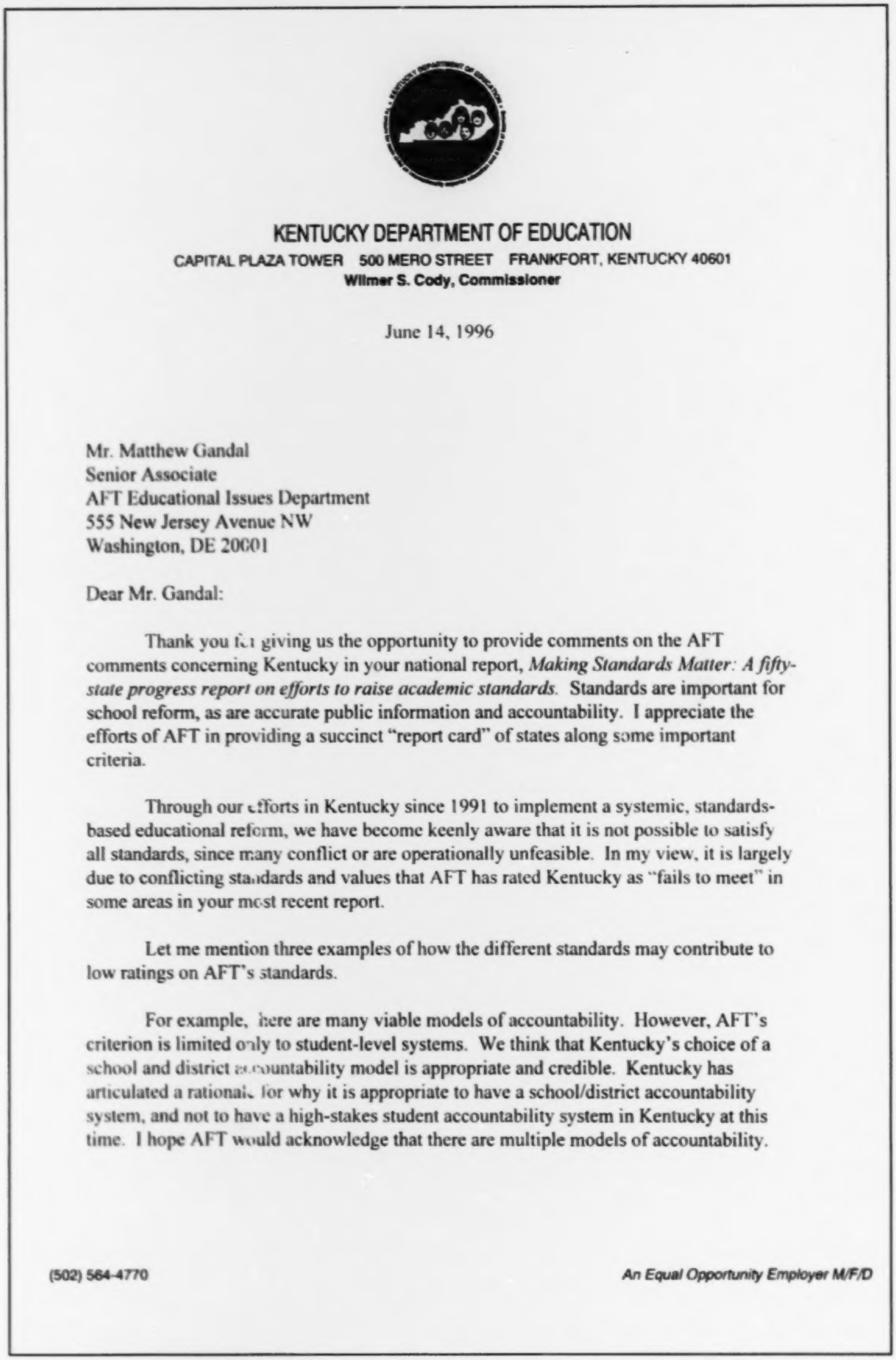
Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to your report.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Fallon

Robert A. Fallon, Director
Office of Program Development

cc: Dr. Suellen Reed, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Phyllis Land Usher, Assistant Superintendent
Mary Tiede, Director of External Affairs
Heidi Glidden, American Federation of Teachers



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CAPITAL PLAZA TOWER 500 MERO STREET FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40601
Wilmer S. Cody, Commissioner

June 14, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Senior Associate
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DE 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide comments on the AFT comments concerning Kentucky in your national report, *Making Standards Matter: A fifty-state progress report on efforts to raise academic standards.* Standards are important for school reform, as are accurate public information and accountability. I appreciate the efforts of AFT in providing a succinct "report card" of states along some important criteria.

Through our efforts in Kentucky since 1991 to implement a systemic, standards-based educational reform, we have become keenly aware that it is not possible to satisfy all standards, since many conflict or are operationally unfeasible. In my view, it is largely due to conflicting standards and values that AFT has rated Kentucky as "fails to meet" in some areas in your most recent report.

Let me mention three examples of how the different standards may contribute to low ratings on AFT's standards.

For example, there are many viable models of accountability. However, AFT's criterion is limited only to student-level systems. We think that Kentucky's choice of a school and district accountability model is appropriate and credible. Kentucky has articulated a rationale for why it is appropriate to have a school/district accountability system, and not to have a high-stakes student accountability system in Kentucky at this time. I hope AFT would acknowledge that there are multiple models of accountability.

(502) 564-4770

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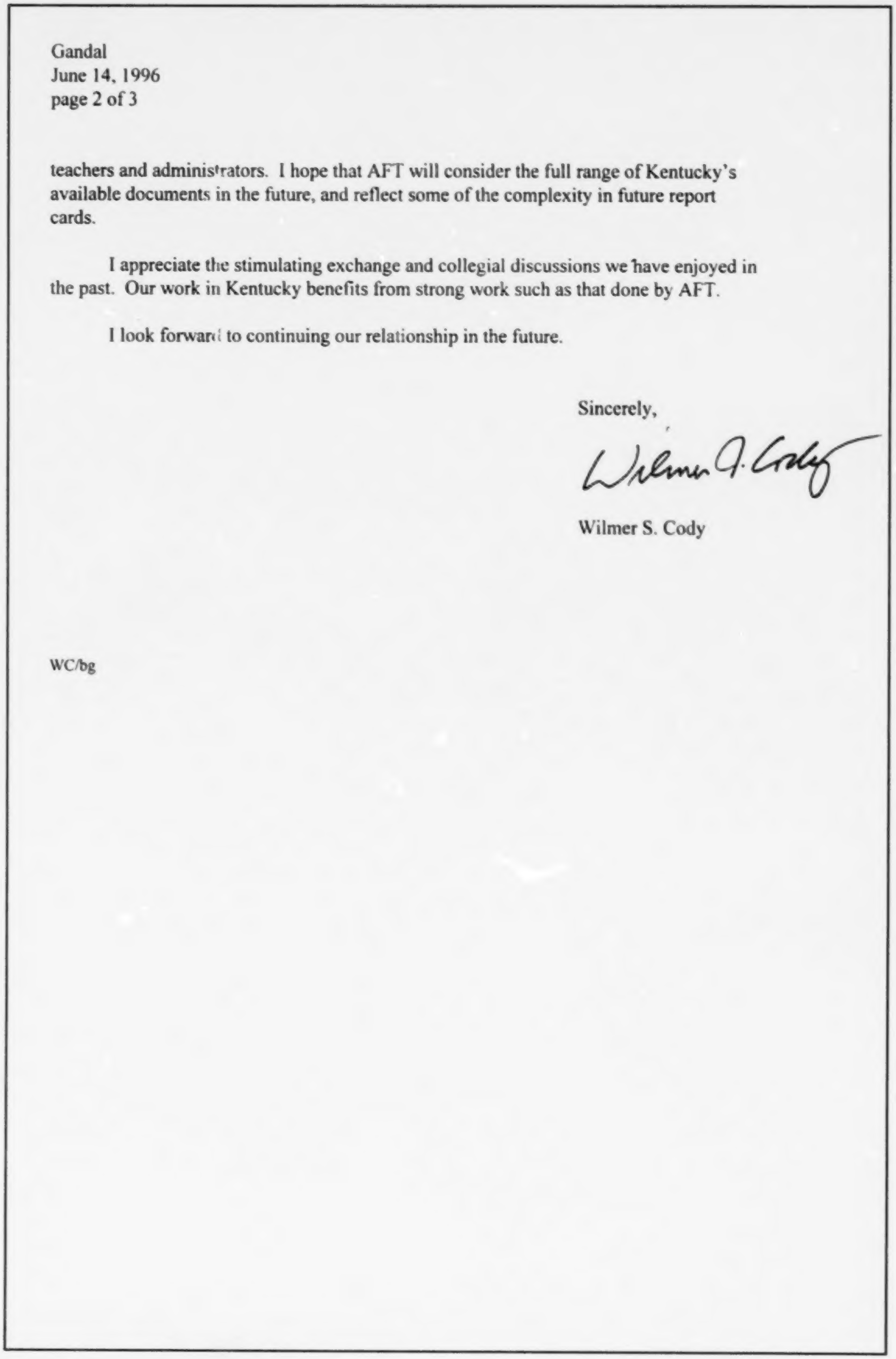
Another example of different standards is the degree of centralization and specification of core curriculum. AFT's model clearly favors a core curriculum specified by the state that should account for as much as 80% of the school curriculum. By including the criterion of "world-class standards" that is operationalized as being comparable to other nations, there is additional pressure to have a common curriculum at the national and international levels. Kentucky is not the only state that has consciously chosen a different spot on the continuum between localized school choice and state or national specification of a curriculum. I expect that as long as we disagree on the principle, Kentucky will continue to fail to meet AFT's standard.

A third example of different standards is the balance between content and skills. Kentucky has chosen to be parsimonious rather than exhaustive in the specification of facts and other specific content, such as dates, places, and time periods for history. This is because our *Core Content* document is designed as assessment specifications, not curriculum specifications. It is also because the *Core Content* document is designed to strike a balance between content and skills that will achieve widespread consensus. The fact that our *Core Content for Assessment* document received letters of endorsement from virtually every professional organization in the state attests to the acceptability to Kentuckians of the balance struck in the document between specificity and generality in content and skills.

Because we have been extensively involved in assessment issues over the past several years, I am sensitive to issues of reliability and validity. The AFT evaluation "report card" will receive extensive public circulation. I hope that the judgments reflected in the report are based on careful and complete information. For example, Kentucky received a rating of "does not meet AFT standard" for English writing standards based on "weak differentiation between grades"; however, our review of some other states' standards documents that were cited as meeting the AFT standard revealed no significant differences other than formatting. It may be useful for AFT to provide technical documentation on the evaluation process to those who request it; certainly a more detailed "scoring rubric" would be appreciated.

Kentucky is committed to standards that serve higher educational achievement of all of Kentucky's children. Kentucky has an elaborate and extensive standards-based educational program that has been operational for five years. We have been concerned from the beginning how standards could be set that were not only appropriately rigorous, but meaningful to teachers, parents, students, and others. Kentucky has tried to provide *meaningful* standards through a combination of documents, including concise statements of goals and academic expectations, sample "demonstrator" tasks in assessment and instruction, operational assessment items linked to performance standards, extensive annotated student work, and assessment reports. These documents have been accompanied by very extensive communication support and professional development for



Gandal
June 14, 1996
page 2 of 3

teachers and administrators. I hope that AFT will consider the full range of Kentucky's available documents in the future, and reflect some of the complexity in future report cards.

I appreciate the stimulating exchange and collegial discussions we have enjoyed in the past. Our work in Kentucky benefits from strong work such as that done by AFT.

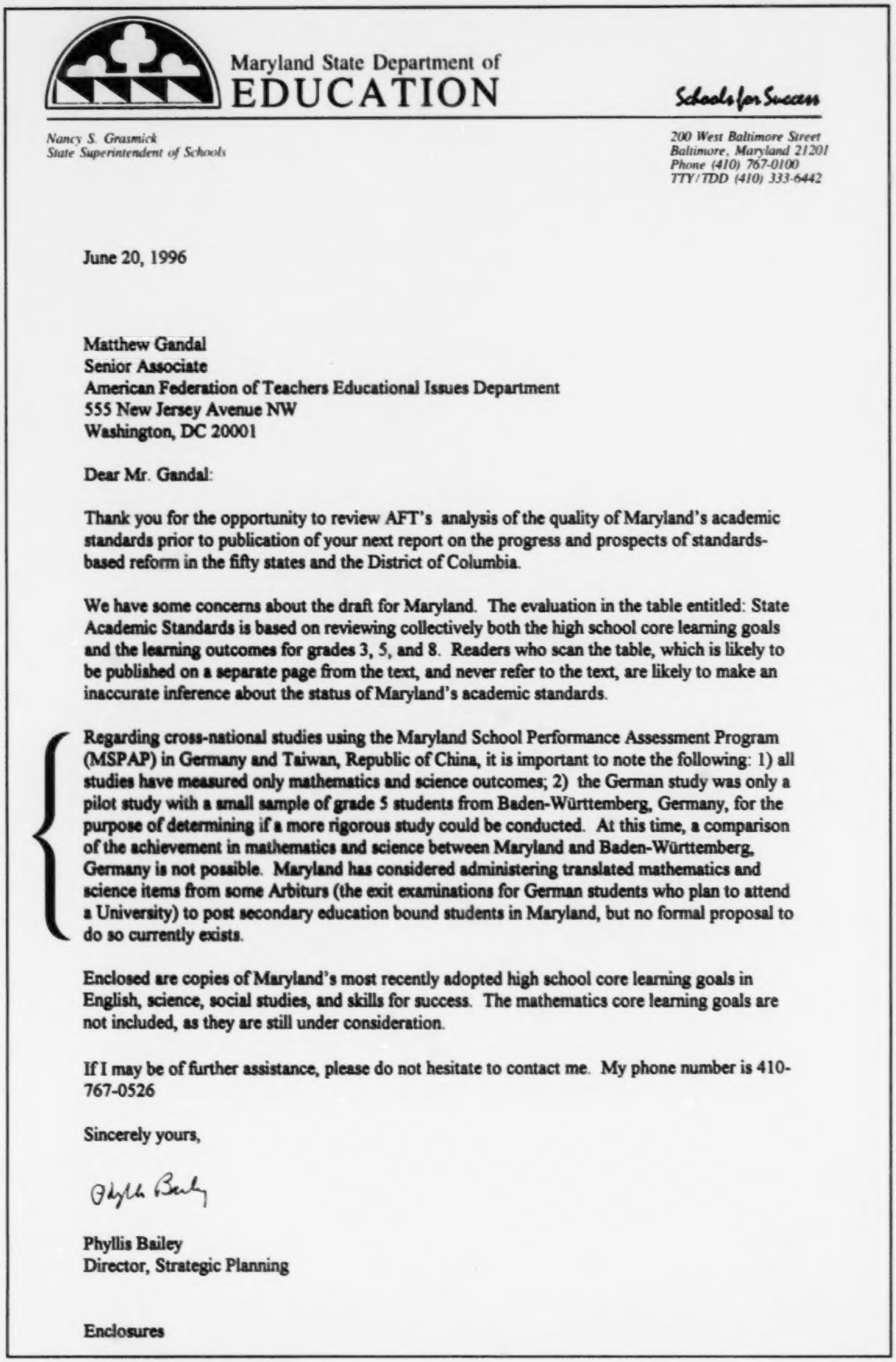
I look forward to continuing our relationship in the future.

Sincerely,

Wilmer S. Cody

Wilmer S. Cody

WC/bg



Maryland State Department of
EDUCATION

Schools for Success

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Phone (410) 767-0100
TTY/TDD (410) 333-6442

June 20, 1996

Matthew Gandal
Senior Associate
American Federation of Teachers Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review AFT's analysis of the quality of Maryland's academic standards prior to publication of your next report on the progress and prospects of standards-based reform in the fifty states and the District of Columbia.

We have some concerns about the draft for Maryland. The evaluation in the table entitled: State Academic Standards is based on reviewing collectively both the high school core learning goals and the learning outcomes for grades 3, 5, and 8. Readers who scan the table, which is likely to be published on a separate page from the text, and never refer to the text, are likely to make an inaccurate inference about the status of Maryland's academic standards.

Regarding cross-national studies using the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) in Germany and Taiwan, Republic of China, it is important to note the following: 1) all studies have measured only mathematics and science outcomes; 2) the German study was only a pilot study with a small sample of grade 5 students from Baden-Württemberg, Germany, for the purpose of determining if a more rigorous study could be conducted. At this time, a comparison of the achievement in mathematics and science between Maryland and Baden-Württemberg, Germany is not possible. Maryland has considered administering translated mathematics and science items from some Arbiturs (the exit examinations for German students who plan to attend a University) to post secondary education bound students in Maryland, but no formal proposal to do so currently exists.

Enclosed are copies of Maryland's most recently adopted high school core learning goals in English, science, social studies, and skills for success. The mathematics core learning goals are not included, as they are still under consideration.

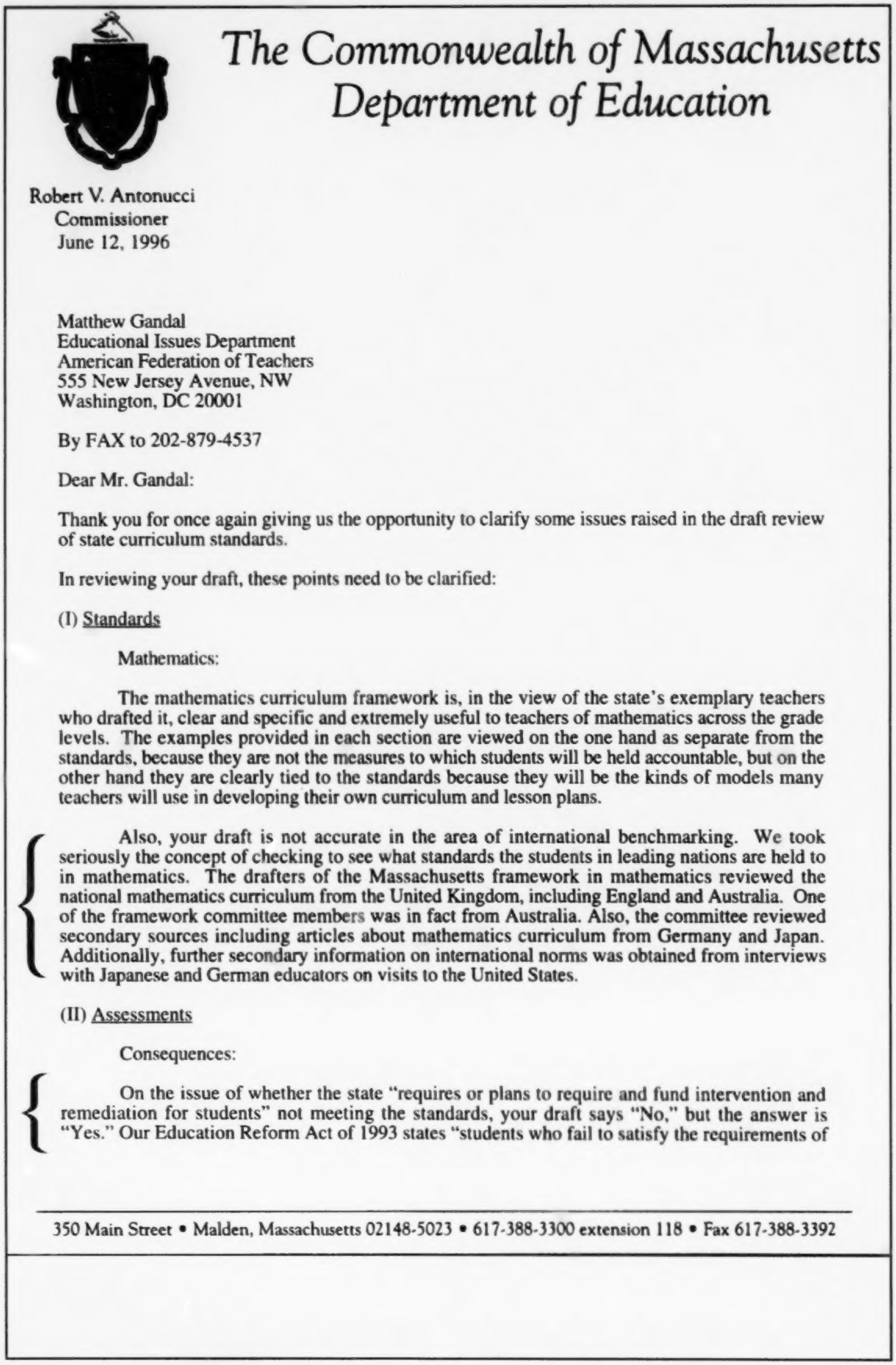
If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me. My phone number is 410-767-0526

Sincerely yours,

Phyllis Bailey

Phyllis Bailey
Director, Strategic Planning

Enclosures



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Education

Robert V. Antonucci
Commissioner

June 12, 1996

Matthew Gandal
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

By FAX to 202-879-4537

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for once again giving us the opportunity to clarify some issues raised in the draft review of state curriculum standards.

In reviewing your draft, these points need to be clarified:

(I) Standards

Mathematics:

The mathematics curriculum framework is, in the view of the state's exemplary teachers who drafted it, clear and specific and extremely useful to teachers of mathematics across the grade levels. The examples provided in each section are viewed on the one hand as separate from the standards, because they are not the measures to which students will be held accountable, but on the other hand they are clearly tied to the standards because they will be the kinds of models many teachers will use in developing their own curriculum and lesson plans.

Also, your draft is not accurate in the area of international benchmarking. We took seriously the concept of checking to see what standards the students in leading nations are held to in mathematics. The drafters of the Massachusetts framework in mathematics reviewed the national mathematics curriculum from the United Kingdom, including England and Australia. One of the framework committee members was in fact from Australia. Also, the committee reviewed secondary sources including articles about mathematics curriculum from Germany and Japan. Additionally, further secondary information on international norms was obtained from interviews with Japanese and German educators on visits to the United States.

(II) Assessments

Consequences:

On the issue of whether the state "requires or plans to require and fund intervention and remediation for students" not meeting the standards, your draft says "No," but the answer is "Yes." Our Education Reform Act of 1993 states "students who fail to satisfy the requirements of

350 Main Street • Malden, Massachusetts 02148-5023 • 617-388-3300 extension 118 • Fax 617-388-3392

the competency determination may be eligible to receive an educational assistance plan." This would be funded by each district out of their budget for education, a portion of which consists of state funds and a portion of which consists of local funds. Clearly, we want all of our students to pass our assessment. We are realistic, however, in anticipating that many will fail the first time they sit for the academic achievement tests. However, we will not lower the bar in order to help more students to pass a test with low standards. Parents and students can expect that a 10th grader who does not pass the first time will need and will receive extra attention so that student can have a better opportunity in 11th grade, and then if necessary in 12th grade to pass the state test.

(III) Final Notes

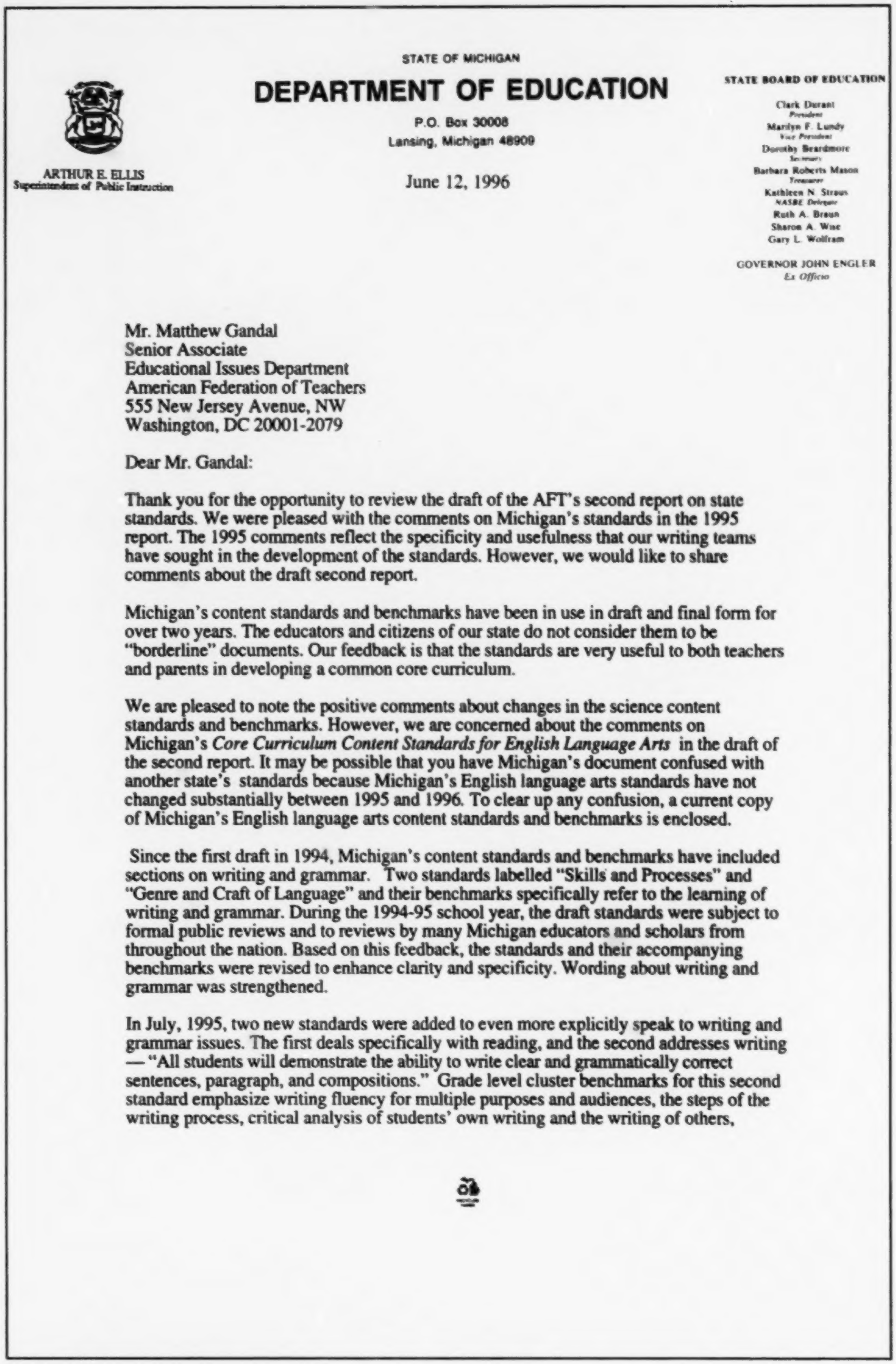
We are currently revising our draft frameworks in English Language Arts and Social Studies, after the Board of Education and I decided that the drafts need strengthening. These should be ready by September. I hope the AFT will review the new versions at that time.

In total, Massachusetts has approved five frameworks, and is revising two others. We continue to receive extremely positive comment from the teachers here, who have study groups in every school building reviewing the frameworks so they can begin to implement a local curriculum. They are excited by the frameworks, are enthusiastic about introducing frameworks standards into their classrooms, and are challenged by the standards and vignettes and examples contained in them. For the math, science/technology, world language, arts and health frameworks, there is a nearly unanimous view in this regard.

As we stated in our July 1995 letter to the AFT, we are confident that our frameworks will provide a strong foundation for our assessment, and that this will be accomplished while preserving local flexibility for developing curriculum and lesson plans. Massachusetts has always been among the national leaders in every set of measures of student achievement. We will have frameworks second to none. You can count on it.

Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci
Commissioner of Education



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909

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Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Ex Officio

June 12, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Senior Associate
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

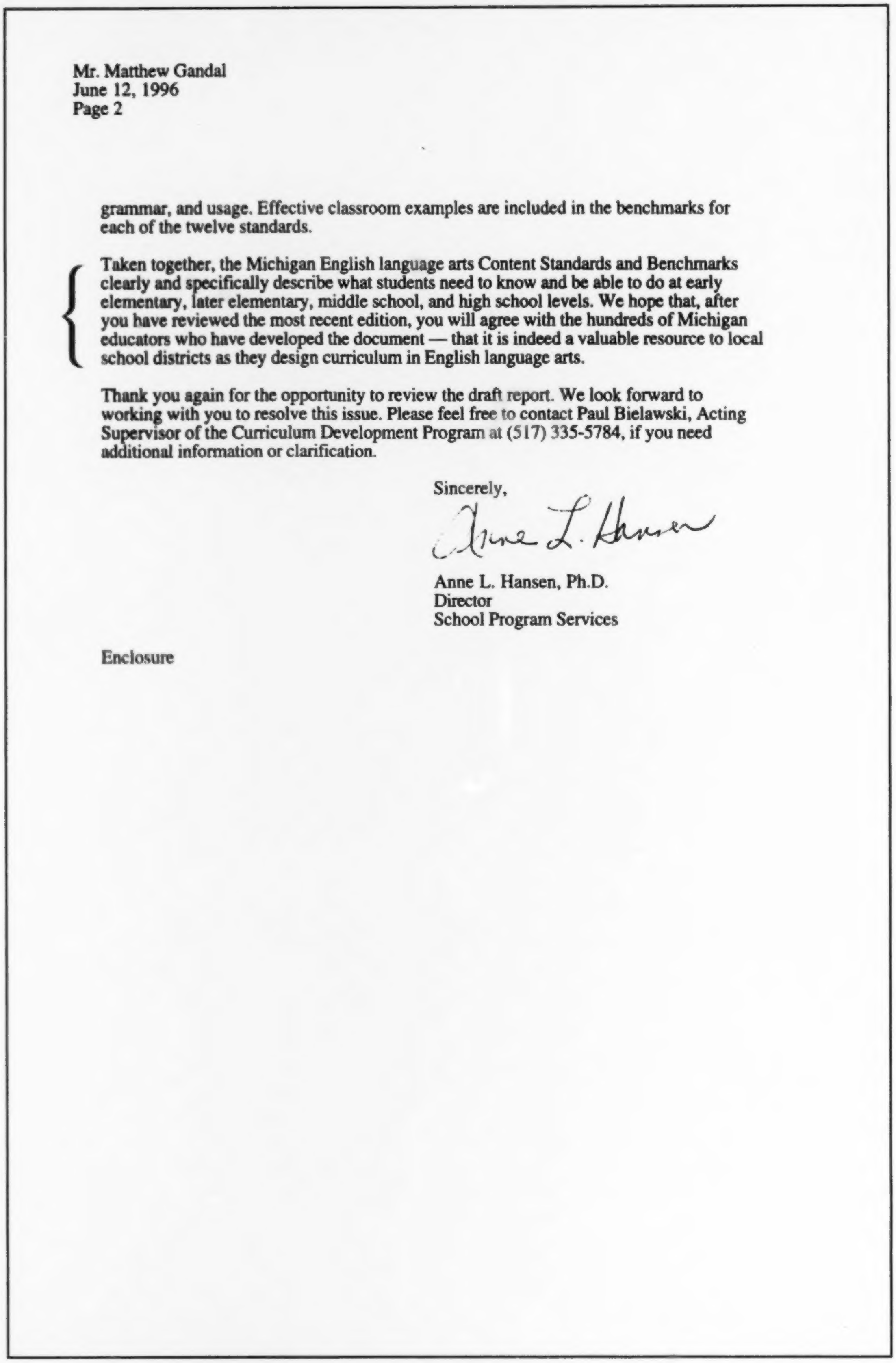
Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft of the AFT's second report on state standards. We were pleased with the comments on Michigan's standards in the 1995 report. The 1995 comments reflect the specificity and usefulness that our writing teams have sought in the development of the standards. However, we would like to share comments about the draft second report.

Michigan's content standards and benchmarks have been in use in draft and final form for over two years. The educators and citizens of our state do not consider them to be "borderline" documents. Our feedback is that the standards are very useful to both teachers and parents in developing a common core curriculum.

We are pleased to note the positive comments about changes in the science content standards and benchmarks. However, we are concerned about the comments on Michigan's *Core Curriculum Content Standards for English Language Arts* in the draft of the second report. It may be possible that you have Michigan's document confused with another state's standards because Michigan's English language arts standards have not changed substantially between 1995 and 1996. To clear up any confusion, a current copy of Michigan's English language arts content standards and benchmarks is enclosed.

Since the first draft in 1994, Michigan's content standards and benchmarks have included sections on writing and grammar. Two standards labelled "Skills and Processes" and "Genre and Craft of Language" and their benchmarks specifically refer to the learning of writing and grammar. During the 1994-95 school year, the draft standards were subject to formal public reviews and to reviews by many Michigan educators and scholars from throughout the nation. Based on this feedback, the standards and their accompanying benchmarks were revised to enhance clarity and specificity. Wording about writing and grammar was strengthened.

In July, 1995, two new standards were added to even more explicitly speak to writing and grammar issues. The first deals specifically with reading, and the second addresses writing — "All students will demonstrate the ability to write clear and grammatically correct sentences, paragraph, and compositions." Grade level cluster benchmarks for this second standard emphasize writing fluency for multiple purposes and audiences, the steps of the writing process, critical analysis of students' own writing and the writing of others,



grammar, and usage. Effective classroom examples are included in the benchmarks for each of the twelve standards.

Taken together, the Michigan English language arts Content Standards and Benchmarks clearly and specifically describe what students need to know and be able to do at early elementary, later elementary, middle school, and high school levels. We hope that, after you have reviewed the most recent edition, you will agree with the hundreds of Michigan educators who have developed the document — that it is indeed a valuable resource to local school districts as they design curriculum in English language arts.

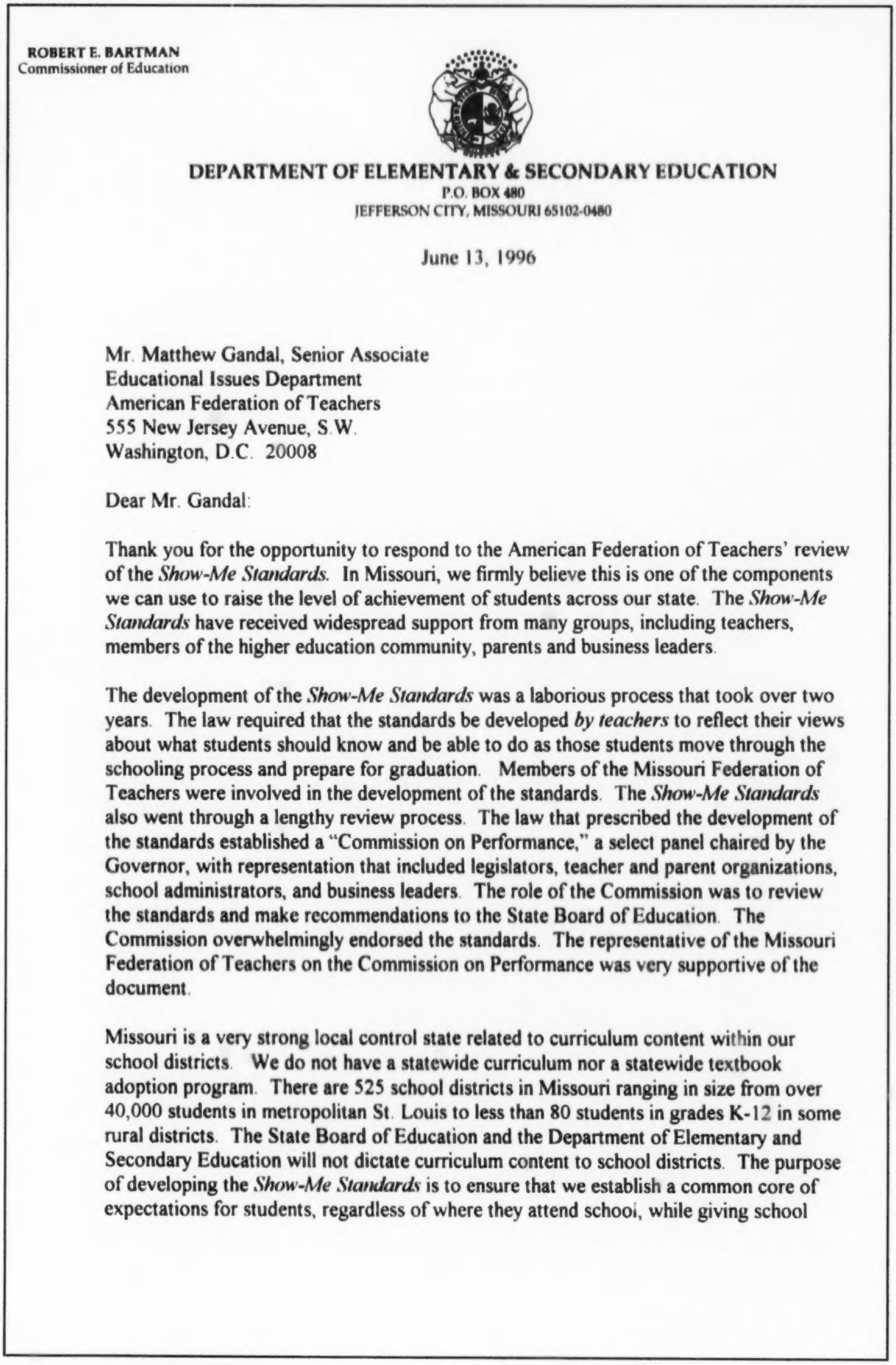
Thank you again for the opportunity to review the draft report. We look forward to working with you to resolve this issue. Please feel free to contact Paul Bielawski, Acting Supervisor of the Curriculum Development Program at (517) 335-5784, if you need additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Anne L. Hansen

Anne L. Hansen, Ph.D.
Director
School Program Services

Enclosure



ROBERT E. BARTMAN
Commissioner of Education

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 480
JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI 65102-0480

June 13, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal, Senior Associate
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the American Federation of Teachers' review of the *Show-Me Standards*. In Missouri, we firmly believe this is one of the components we can use to raise the level of achievement of students across our state. The *Show-Me Standards* have received widespread support from many groups, including teachers, members of the higher education community, parents and business leaders.

The development of the *Show-Me Standards* was a laborious process that took over two years. The law required that the standards be developed *by teachers* to reflect their views about what students should know and be able to do as those students move through the schooling process and prepare for graduation. Members of the Missouri Federation of Teachers were involved in the development of the standards. The *Show-Me Standards* also went through a lengthy review process. The law that prescribed the development of the standards established a "Commission on Performance," a select panel chaired by the Governor, with representation that included legislators, teacher and parent organizations, school administrators, and business leaders. The role of the Commission was to review the standards and make recommendations to the State Board of Education. The Commission overwhelmingly endorsed the standards. The representative of the Missouri Federation of Teachers on the Commission on Performance was very supportive of the document.

Missouri is a very strong local control state related to curriculum content within our school districts. We do not have a statewide curriculum nor a statewide textbook adoption program. There are 525 school districts in Missouri ranging in size from over 40,000 students in metropolitan St. Louis to less than 80 students in grades K-12 in some rural districts. The State Board of Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will not dictate curriculum content to school districts. The purpose of developing the *Show-Me Standards* is to ensure that we establish a common core of expectations for students, regardless of where they attend school, while giving school districts the flexibility to implement an appropriate curriculum design for their communities. We feel the *Show-Me Standards* and the curriculum frameworks meet that goal.

Our standards are broad statements because we were limited, by law, to no more than 75 "academic performance standards." However, as we have been explaining to other critics, the standards should not just be judged on their own but as a part of a package of components to change the focus of instruction and raise the level of expectations for students across Missouri. The *Show-Me Standards* are supplemented by the curriculum frameworks. In looking at the criteria you established for evaluating academic performance standards, we feel the standards and frameworks together meet many of your expectations.

The curriculum frameworks address your issue #2 related to the standards being clear and specific enough to form the basis for a common core curriculum in a school district. The standards with the frameworks provide the foundation for ensuring that all students, whether in poor or wealthy districts, are exposed to a rich and challenging curriculum and are held to high expectations for achievement.

The frameworks define, at designated grade levels, the common content and skills students should learn in each subject. They are firmly rooted in the content of the subject area. The frameworks are currently in draft form. They are being reviewed by local professional development committees across the state. After those reviews, revisions will be made by the frameworks writers to make the documents "user-friendly" and to assist in local curriculum development.

There are two changes we would like you to consider in your report. First, the standards themselves are in final form and not draft form. They were adopted by the State Board of Education on January 18, 1996.

The second change we would like you to consider is your answer to the statement, "standards are clear and specific enough to form the basis of a common core curriculum." Given the issues of local control in Missouri for curriculum development, we believe the standards and frameworks do provide adequate information for school districts to develop a common core curriculum.

We will submit a final version of the curriculum frameworks for your review. Please incorporate this letter as an addendum to your current report.

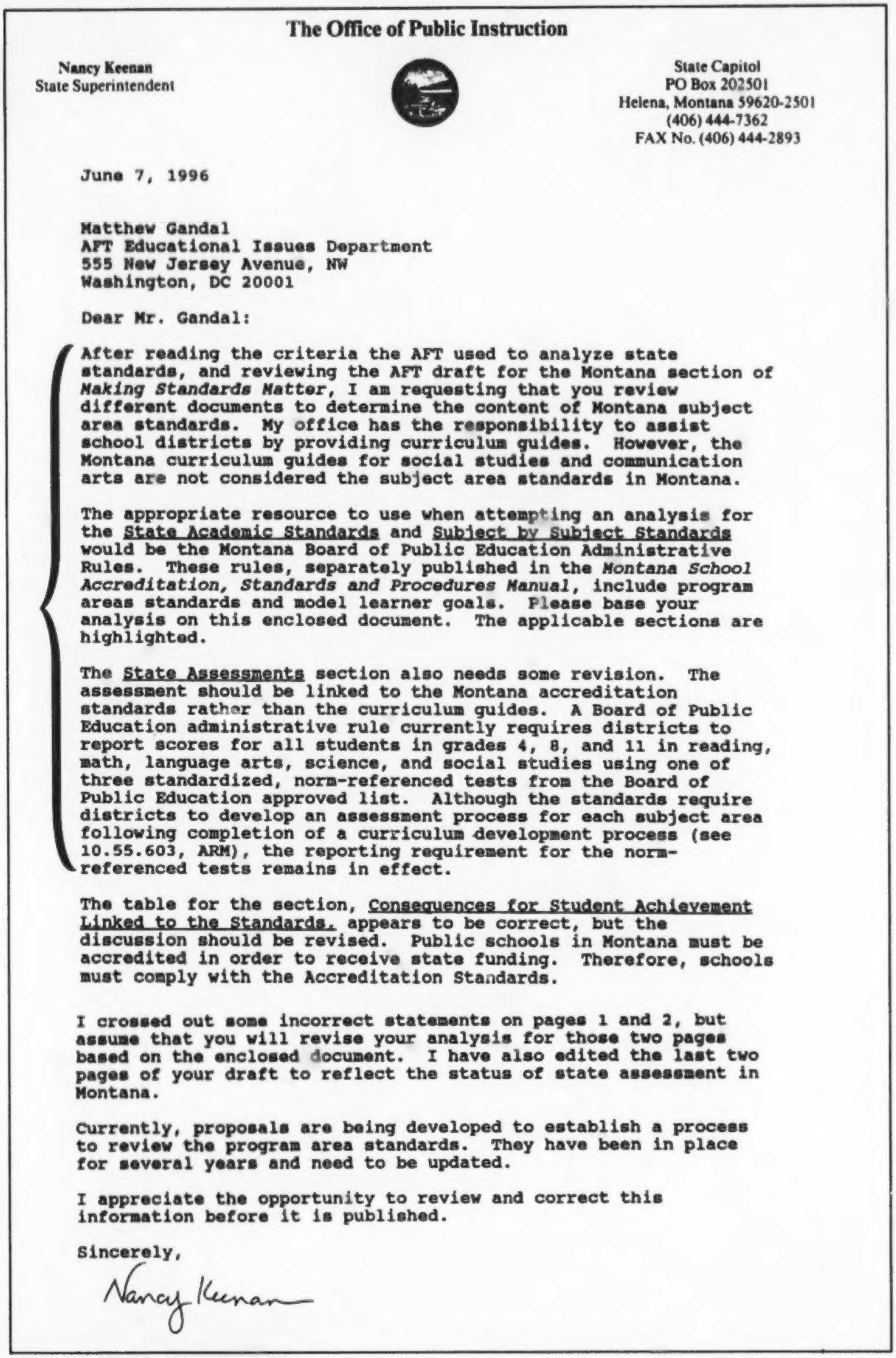
Good wishes.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Bartman

Robert E. Bartman
Commissioner of Education

jk



The Office of Public Instruction

Nancy Keenan
State Superintendent

State Capitol
PO Box 202501
Helena, Montana 59620-2501
(406) 444-7362
FAX No. (406) 444-2893

June 7, 1996

Matthew Gandal
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

After reading the criteria the AFT used to analyze state standards, and reviewing the AFT draft for the Montana section of *Making Standards Matter*, I am requesting that you review different documents to determine the content of Montana subject area standards. My office has the responsibility to assist school districts by providing curriculum guides. However, the Montana curriculum guides for social studies and communication arts are not considered the subject area standards in Montana.

The appropriate resource to use when attempting an analysis for the State Academic Standards and Subject by Subject Standards would be the Montana Board of Public Education Administrative Rules. These rules, separately published in the *Montana School Accreditation, Standards and Procedures Manual*, include program areas standards and model learner goals. Please base your analysis on this enclosed document. The applicable sections are highlighted.

The State Assessments section also needs some revision. The assessment should be linked to the Montana accreditation standards rather than the curriculum guides. A Board of Public Education administrative rule currently requires districts to report scores for all students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, math, language arts, science, and social studies using one of three standardized, norm-referenced tests from the Board of Public Education approved list. Although the standards require districts to develop an assessment process for each subject area following completion of a curriculum development process (see 10.55.603, ARM), the reporting requirement for the norm-referenced tests remains in effect.

The table for the section, Consequences for Student Achievement Linked to the Standards, appears to be correct, but the discussion should be revised. Public schools in Montana must be accredited in order to receive state funding. Therefore, schools must comply with the Accreditation Standards.

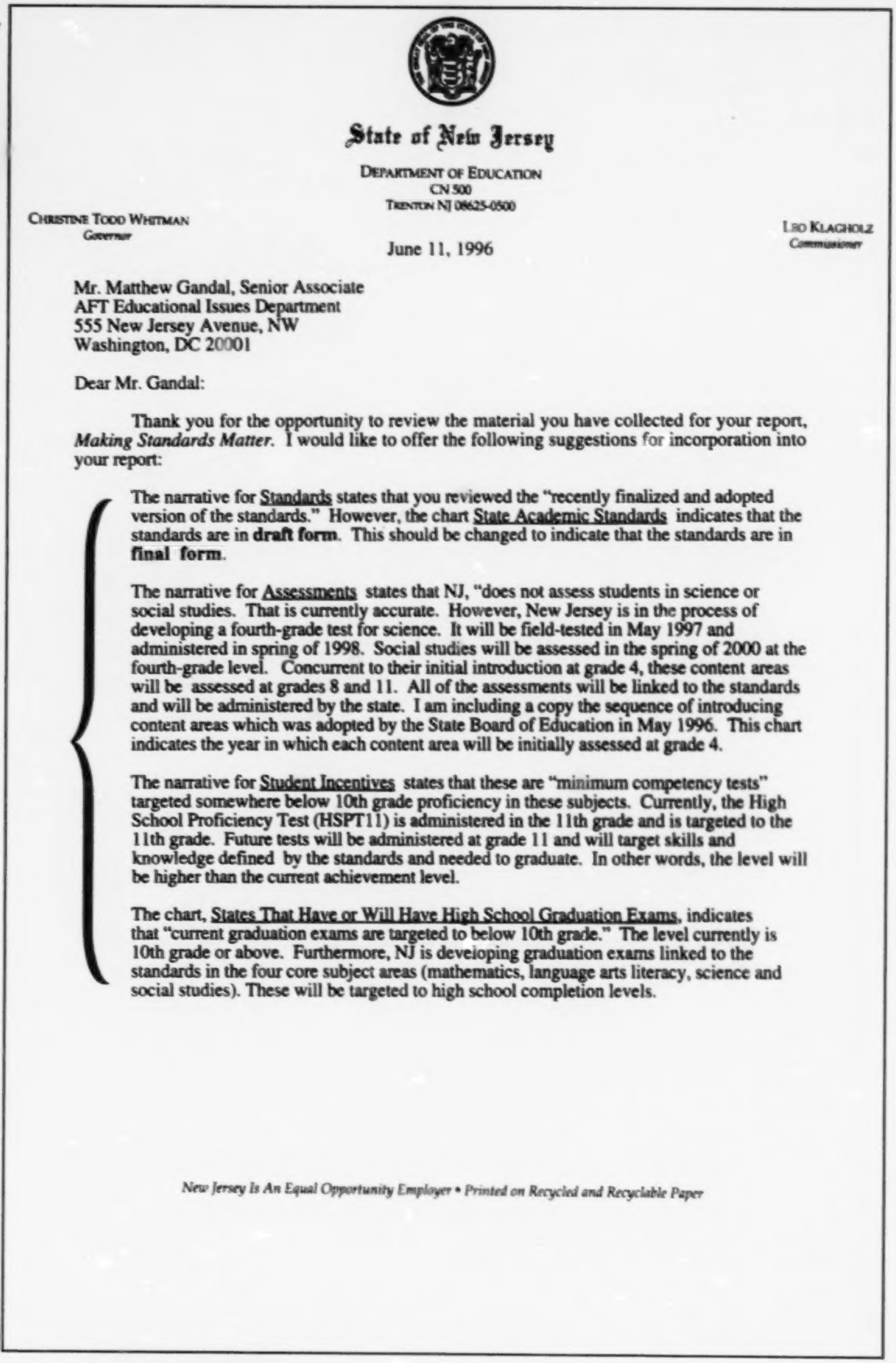
I crossed out some incorrect statements on pages 1 and 2, but assume that you will revise your analysis for those two pages based on the enclosed document. I have also edited the last two pages of your draft to reflect the status of state assessment in Montana.

Currently, proposals are being developed to establish a process to review the program area standards. They have been in place for several years and need to be updated.

I appreciate the opportunity to review and correct this information before it is published.

Sincerely,

Nancy Keenan



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CN 500
TRENTON NJ 08625-0500

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN
Governor

LEO KLAGHOLZ
Commissioner

June 11, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal, Senior Associate
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the material you have collected for your report, *Making Standards Matter*. I would like to offer the following suggestions for incorporation into your report:

The narrative for Standards states that you reviewed the "recently finalized and adopted version of the standards." However, the chart State Academic Standards indicates that the standards are in **draft form**. This should be changed to indicate that the standards are in **final form**.

The narrative for Assessments states that NJ, "does not assess students in science or social studies. That is currently accurate. However, New Jersey is in the process of developing a fourth-grade test for science. It will be field-tested in May 1997 and administered in spring of 1998. Social studies will be assessed in the spring of 2000 at the fourth-grade level. Concurrent to their initial introduction at grade 4, these content areas will be assessed at grades 8 and 11. All of the assessments will be linked to the standards and will be administered by the state. I am including a copy the sequence of introducing content areas which was adopted by the State Board of Education in May 1996. This chart indicates the year in which each content area will be initially assessed at grade 4.

The narrative for Student Incentives states that these are "minimum competency tests" targeted somewhere below 10th grade proficiency in these subjects. Currently, the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT11) is administered in the 11th grade and is targeted to the 11th grade. Future tests will be administered at grade 11 and will target skills and knowledge defined by the standards and needed to graduate. In other words, the level will be higher than the current achievement level.

The chart, States That Have or Will Have High School Graduation Exams, indicates that "current graduation exams are targeted to below 10th grade." The level currently is 10th grade or above. Furthermore, NJ is developing graduation exams linked to the standards in the four core subject areas (mathematics, language arts literacy, science and social studies). These will be targeted to high school completion levels.

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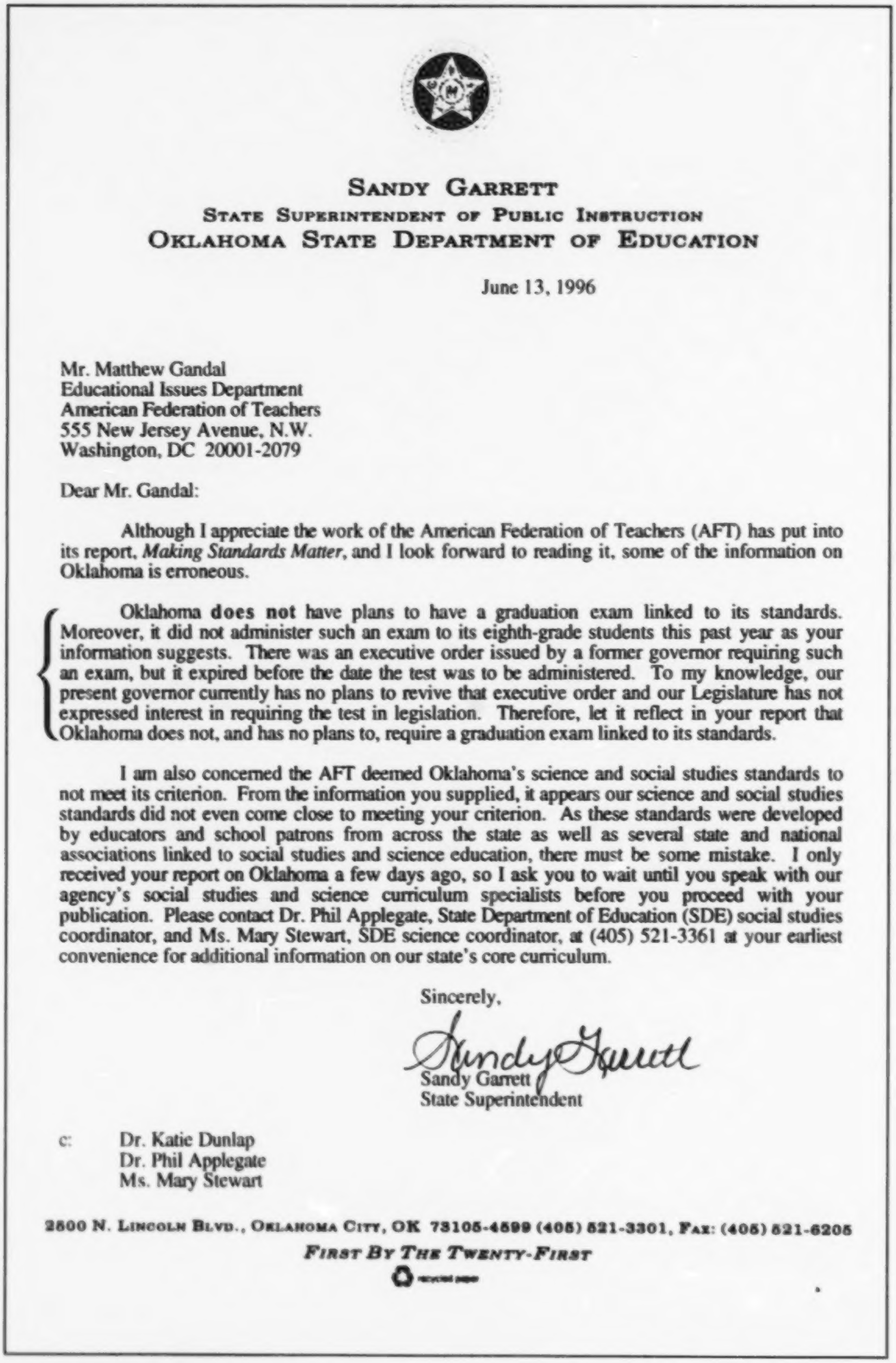
I appreciate the opportunity to review these materials. If you need any additional information or have any questions, please feel free to contact my office at (609)984-5322.

Sincerely,

Gary T. Reece

Gary T. Reece, Assistant Commissioner
Office of Standards and Assessment

DHC:GTR:es
Enclosure
c. Leo Klagholz
  Richard A. DiPatri
  Ellen Schechter
  Gerald E. DeMauro



SANDY GARRETT
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

June 13, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Although I appreciate the work of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has put into its report, *Making Standards Matter*, and I look forward to reading it, some of the information on Oklahoma is erroneous.

Oklahoma **does not** have plans to have a graduation exam linked to its standards. Moreover, it did not administer such an exam to its eighth-grade students this past year as your information suggests. There was an executive order issued by a former governor requiring such an exam, but it expired before the date the test was to be administered. To my knowledge, our present governor currently has no plans to revive that executive order and our Legislature has not expressed interest in requiring the test in legislation. Therefore, let it reflect in your report that Oklahoma does not, and has no plans to, require a graduation exam linked to its standards.

I am also concerned the AFT deemed Oklahoma's science and social studies standards to not meet its criterion. From the information you supplied, it appears our science and social studies standards did not even come close to meeting your criterion. As these standards were developed by educators and school patrons from across the state as well as several state and national associations linked to social studies and science education, there must be some mistake. I only received your report on Oklahoma a few days ago, so I ask you to wait until you speak with our agency's social studies and science curriculum specialists before you proceed with your publication. Please contact Dr. Phil Applegate, State Department of Education (SDE) social studies coordinator, and Ms. Mary Stewart, SDE science coordinator, at (405) 521-3361 at your earliest convenience for additional information on our state's core curriculum.

Sincerely,

Sandy Garrett

Sandy Garrett
State Superintendent

c: Dr. Katie Dunlap
Dr. Phil Applegate
Ms. Mary Stewart

2500 N. LINCOLN BLVD., OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73105-4599 (405) 521-3301, FAX: (405) 521-6205

FIRST BY THE TWENTY-FIRST

NORMA PAULUS
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

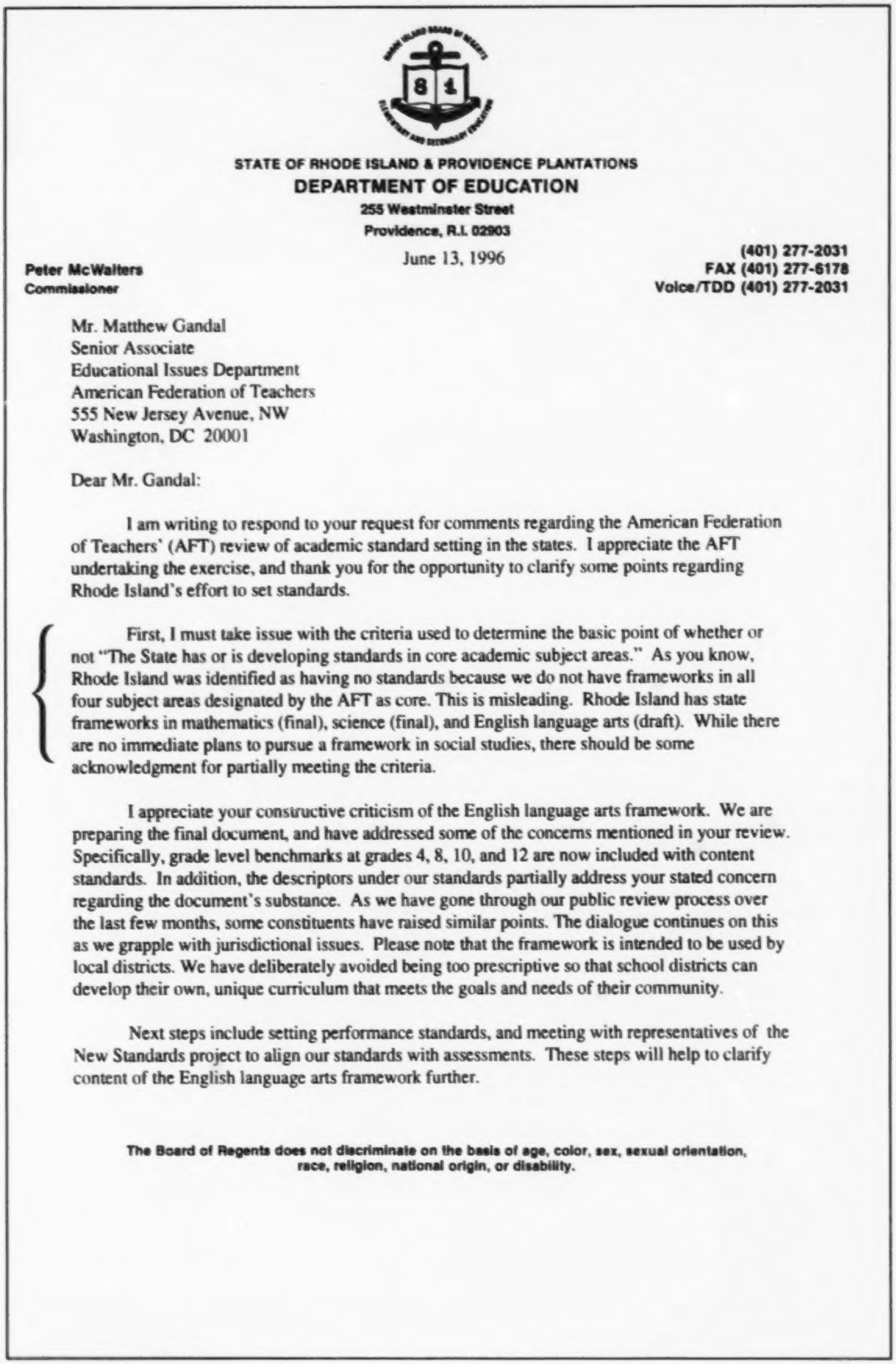
OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Public Service Building, 255 Capitol Street NE, Salem, Oregon 97310-0203
Phone (503) 378-3569 • Fax (503) 373-7968

The Oregon Department of Education thought the following additional information might be helpful:

Oregon's content and performance standards are key elements in the state's effort to improve education for all students. They were created to describe and measure the knowledge and skills students must have in English, mathematics, science, history, economics, geography, civics, the arts and a second language to receive the Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery. The content standards do not stand alone nor do they encompass all that is valued in the curriculum. The state content standards are a subset of a curriculum framework, called the Common Curriculum Goals, that schools are expected to use in designing their curriculum. The state standards are intended to be rigorous and to represent the core elements that students should know and be able to apply.

The standards will be accompanied by model curricula and other supplementary materials now being developed to help schools prepare students to meet the rigorous new standards. Oregon has adopted a phase-in schedule for the new state assessments. Testing will begin in English and mathematics in 1996-97, science in 1997-98, and the four social sciences in 1998-99.

EDUCATION FIRST!



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND & PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
255 Westminster Street
Providence, R.I. 02903

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

(401) 277-2031
FAX (401) 277-6178
Voice/TDD (401) 277-2031

June 13, 1996

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Senior Associate
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

I am writing to respond to your request for comments regarding the American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) review of academic standard setting in the states. I appreciate the AFT undertaking the exercise, and thank you for the opportunity to clarify some points regarding Rhode Island's effort to set standards.

First, I must take issue with the criteria used to determine the basic point of whether or not "The State has or is developing standards in core academic subject areas." As you know, Rhode Island was identified as having no standards because we do not have frameworks in all four subject areas designated by the AFT as core. This is misleading. Rhode Island has state frameworks in mathematics (final), science (final), and English language arts (draft). While there are no immediate plans to pursue a framework in social studies, there should be some acknowledgment for partially meeting the criteria.

I appreciate your constructive criticism of the English language arts framework. We are preparing the final document, and have addressed some of the concerns mentioned in your review. Specifically, grade level benchmarks at grades 4, 8, 10, and 12 are now included with content standards. In addition, the descriptors under our standards partially address your stated concern regarding the document's substance. As we have gone through our public review process over the last few months, some constituents have raised similar points. The dialogue continues on this as we grapple with jurisdictional issues. Please note that the framework is intended to be used by local districts. We have deliberately avoided being too prescriptive so that school districts can develop their own, unique curriculum that meets the goals and needs of their community.

Next steps include setting performance standards, and meeting with representatives of the New Standards project to align our standards with assessments. These steps will help to clarify content of the English language arts framework further.

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.

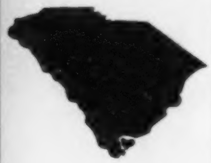
Rhode Island's frameworks in mathematics and science were produced by statewide development teams representing diverse constituencies. The documents reflect the views of hundreds of classroom teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. These frameworks contain the level of detail that Rhode Islanders view as appropriate from the state level.

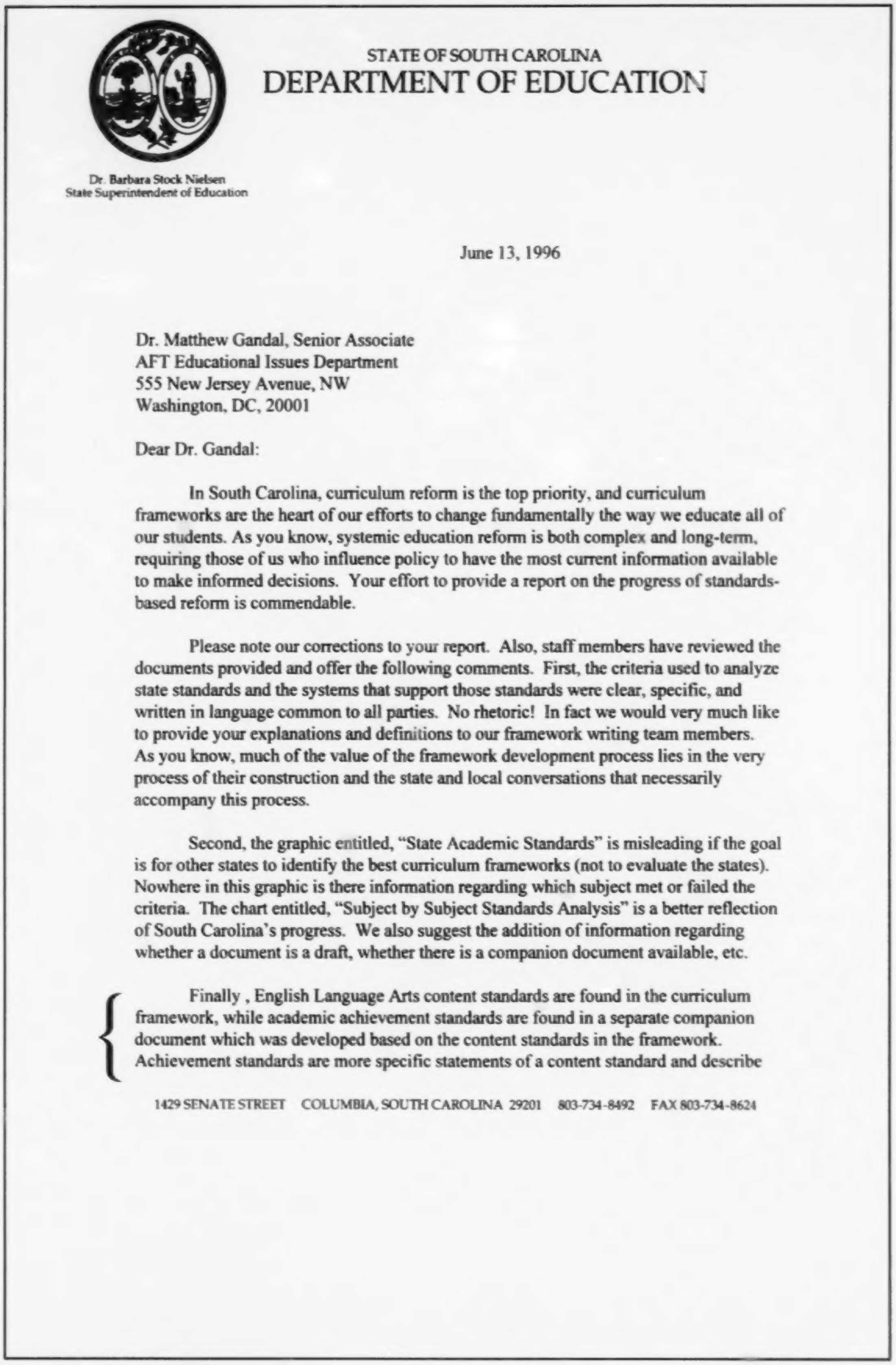
For example, Rhode Island's science framework builds upon Project 2061's Benchmarks for Science Literacy, which has the consensus of thousands of members of the American Association for the Advancement and K - 12 educators. Again, because of jurisdictional issues, the framework suggests that districts and schools obtain the Benchmark document and wrestle with all of its 855 benchmarks, using those featured within Rhode Island's framework as a point of departure.

Again, many thanks for sharing your evaulation with us, and for providing the opportunity to comment on the review. We are continuously striving to make meaningful improvements. In fact, we produce each of our frameworks in a notebook format to encourage continued evolution and refinement.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner





STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Barbara Stock Nielsen
State Superintendent of Education

June 13, 1996

Dr. Matthew Gandal, Senior Associate
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC, 20001

Dear Dr. Gandal:

In South Carolina, curriculum reform is the top priority, and curriculum frameworks are the heart of our efforts to change fundamentally the way we educate all of our students. As you know, systemic education reform is both complex and long-term, requiring those of us who influence policy to have the most current information available to make informed decisions. Your effort to provide a report on the progress of standards-based reform is commendable.

Please note our corrections to your report. Also, staff members have reviewed the documents provided and offer the following comments. First, the criteria used to analyze state standards and the systems that support those standards were clear, specific, and written in language common to all parties. No rhetoric! In fact we would very much like to provide your explanations and definitions to our framework writing team members. As you know, much of the value of the framework development process lies in the very process of their construction and the state and local conversations that necessarily accompany this process.

Second, the graphic entitled, "State Academic Standards" is misleading if the goal is for other states to identify the best curriculum frameworks (not to evaluate the states). Nowhere in this graphic is there information regarding which subject met or failed the criteria. The chart entitled, "Subject by Subject Standards Analysis" is a better reflection of South Carolina's progress. We also suggest the addition of information regarding whether a document is a draft, whether there is a companion document available, etc.

Finally , English Language Arts content standards are found in the curriculum framework, while academic achievement standards are found in a separate companion document which was developed based on the content standards in the framework. Achievement standards are more specific statements of a content standard and describe

1429 SENATE STREET COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29201 803-734-8492 FAX 803-734-8624

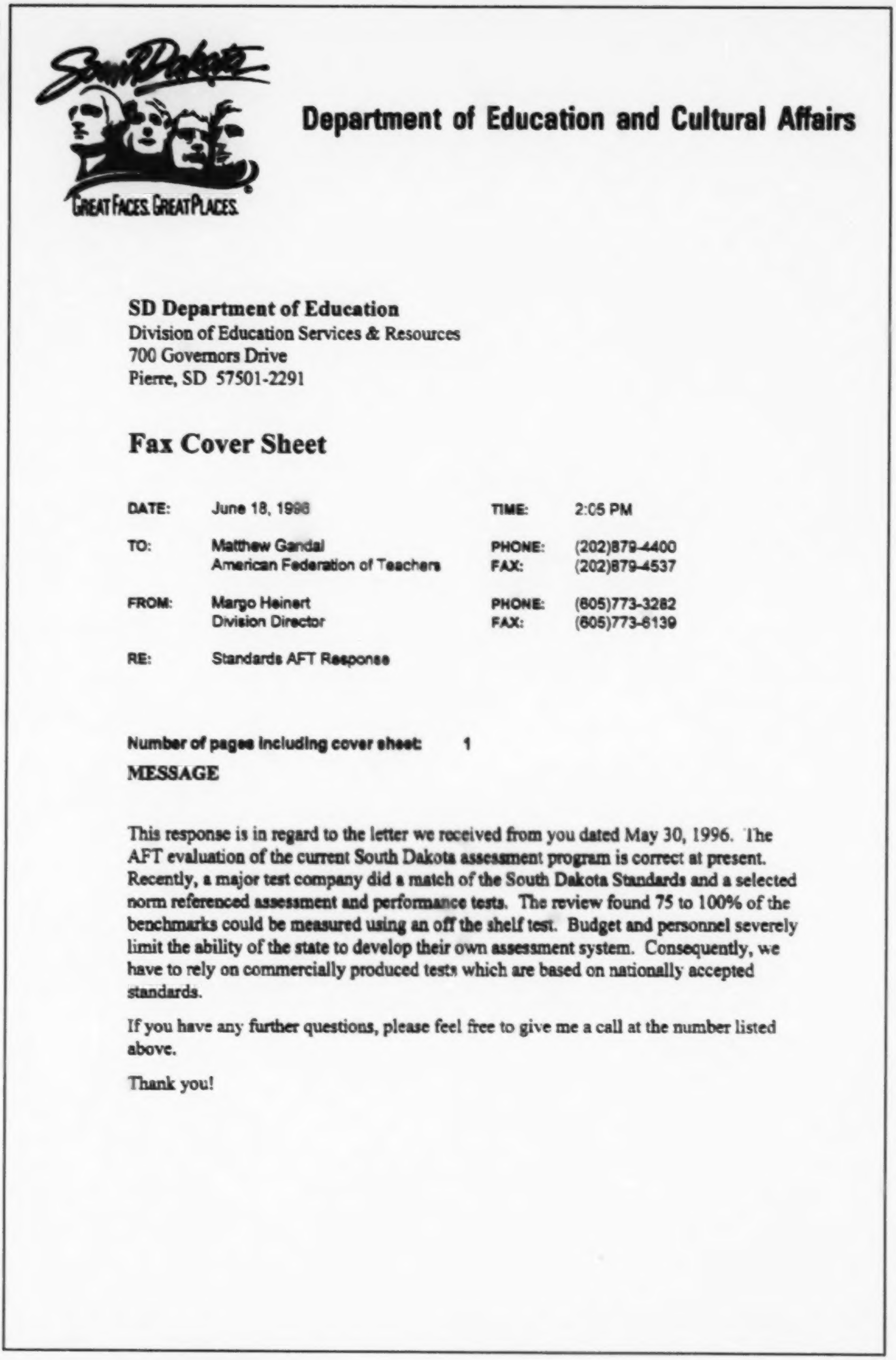
the nature of the evidence and what a student must do in order to show attainment of the content standard. A copy of South Carolina's English Language Arts Academic Achievement Standards for your review will be mailed to your attention.

Thanks to you and your colleagues at the American Federation of Teachers for anticipating state's needs and working to provide information that will allow us to secure the kind of future necessary for our students if they are to thrive in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Pamela P. Pritchett

Pamela P. Pritchett
Senior Executive Assistant



Department of Education and Cultural Affairs

GREAT FACES. GREAT PLACES.

SD Department of Education
Division of Education Services & Resources
700 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501-2291

Fax Cover Sheet

DATE: June 18, 1996 **TIME:** 2:05 PM

TO: Matthew Gandal **PHONE:** (202)879-4400
American Federation of Teachers **FAX:** (202)879-4537

FROM: Margo Heinert **PHONE:** (605)773-3282
Division Director **FAX:** (605)773-6139

RE: Standards AFT Response

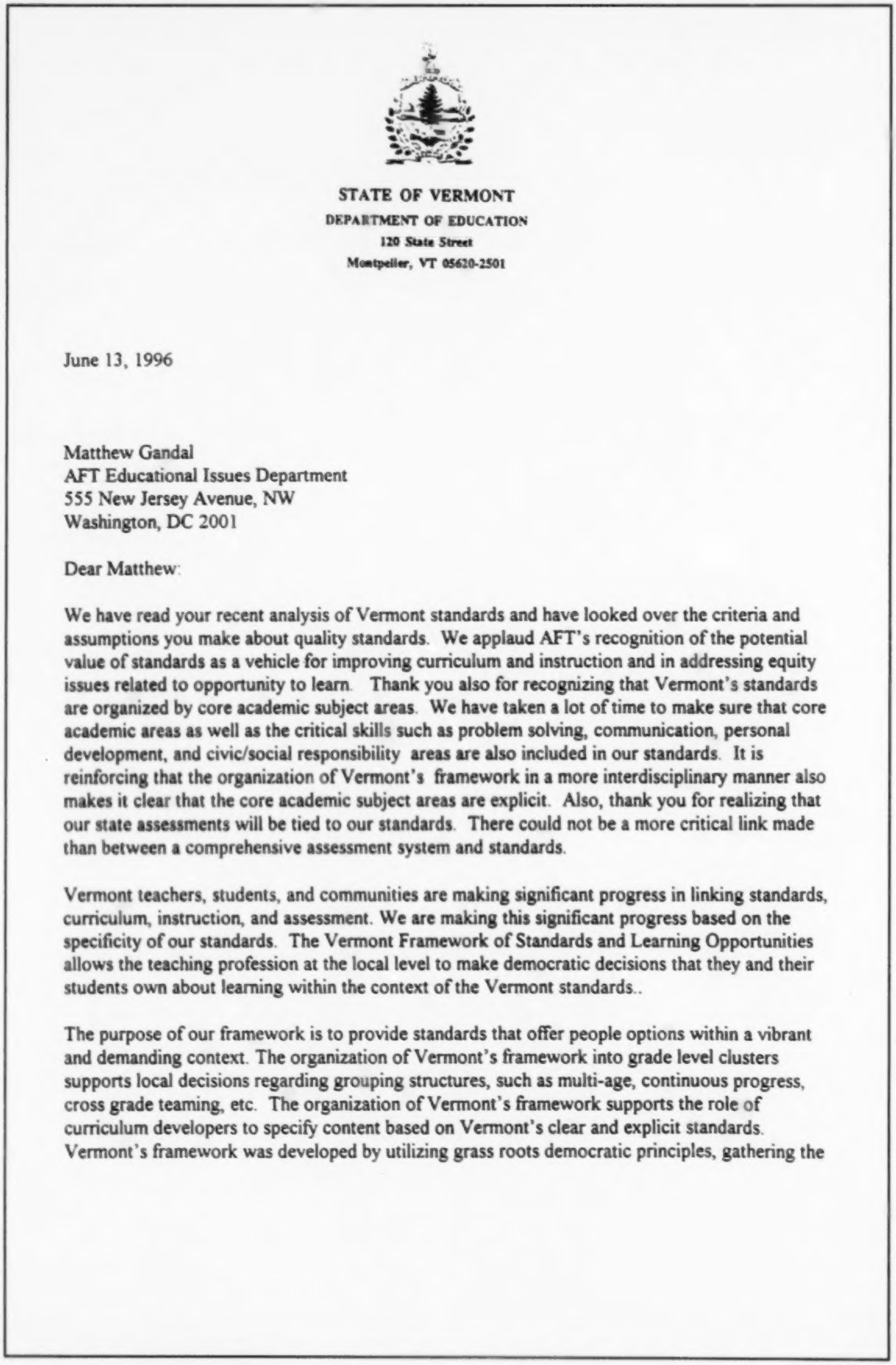
Number of pages including cover sheet: 1

MESSAGE

This response is in regard to the letter we received from you dated May 30, 1996. The AFT evaluation of the current South Dakota assessment program is correct at present. Recently, a major test company did a match of the South Dakota Standards and a selected norm referenced assessment and performance tests. The review found 75 to 100% of the benchmarks could be measured using an off the shelf test. Budget and personnel severely limit the ability of the state to develop their own assessment system. Consequently, we have to rely on commercially produced tests which are based on nationally accepted standards.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to give me a call at the number listed above.

Thank you!



STATE OF VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

June 13, 1996

Matthew Gandal
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 2001

Dear Matthew:

We have read your recent analysis of Vermont standards and have looked over the criteria and assumptions you make about quality standards. We applaud AFT's recognition of the potential value of standards as a vehicle for improving curriculum and instruction and in addressing equity issues related to opportunity to learn. Thank you also for recognizing that Vermont's standards are organized by core academic subject areas. We have taken a lot of time to make sure that core academic areas as well as the critical skills such as problem solving, communication, personal development, and civic/social responsibility areas are also included in our standards. It is reinforcing that the organization of Vermont's framework in a more interdisciplinary manner also makes it clear that the core academic subject areas are explicit. Also, thank you for realizing that our state assessments will be tied to our standards. There could not be a more critical link made than between a comprehensive assessment system and standards.

Vermont teachers, students, and communities are making significant progress in linking standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. We are making this significant progress based on the specificity of our standards. The Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities allows the teaching profession at the local level to make democratic decisions that they and their students own about learning within the context of the Vermont standards..

The purpose of our framework is to provide standards that offer people options within a vibrant and demanding context. The organization of Vermont's framework into grade level clusters supports local decisions regarding grouping structures, such as multi-age, continuous progress, cross grade teaming, etc. The organization of Vermont's framework supports the role of curriculum developers to specify content based on Vermont's clear and explicit standards. Vermont's framework was developed by utilizing grass roots democratic principles, gathering the best thinking of our general public at forums around the state and reaching a consensus with professionals in the specific areas of academic discipline. Our framework provides a context for schools to develop curriculum which they know will be connected to a wealth of good thinking and aligned with local and state wide assessment. Whether schools provide that information in a geography course, a mathematics course, or an English course, is a decision that belongs to the community, the school, and the students. The State of Vermont's has a critical role in providing resources, professional development, and holding students and schools accountable for progress toward standards.

Adam Urbanski, from a 1993 speech when he was vice-president of the AFT, said, "So, shouldn't we think of assessments of student learning and progress toward standards as more complicated than we do now? And shouldn't the real question be *quality*, i.e., whether or not students are doing quality work and achieving quality levels? I would add my own cautions: that we try to resist the temptation to unnecessarily polarize the issue of standards and assessments, to unnecessarily feel compelled to choose between standards and standardization, between local and national, between old and new, between depth and breadth, between rigor and rigidity, between teaching and testing, between equity and excellence."

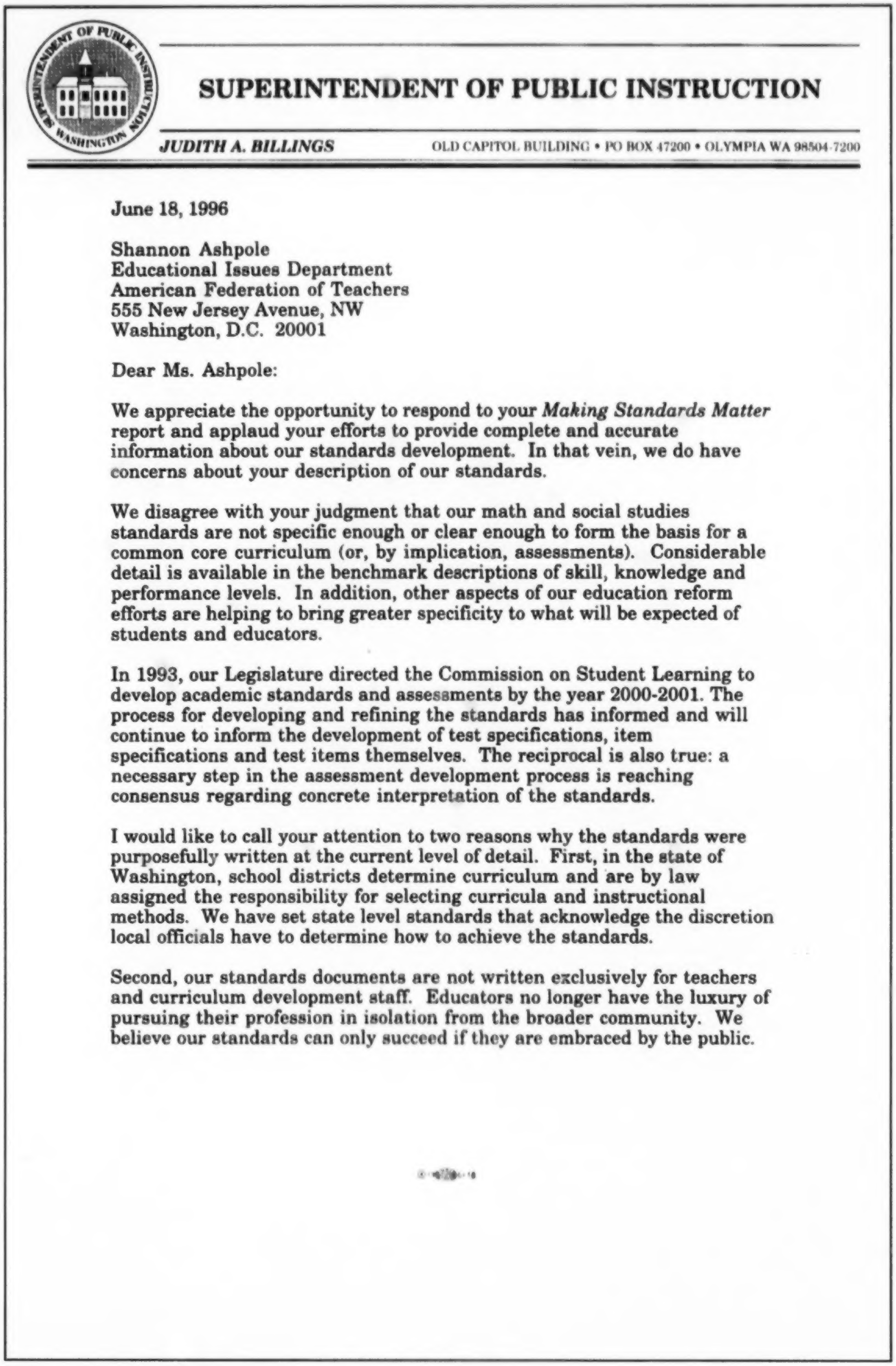
Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your analysis of Vermont's Standards and Learning Opportunities. We hope that our response and others will lead to an opportunity for conversation and partnership.

Sincerely

Doug Walker

Doug Walker
Interim Commissioner
Vermont Department of Education

Tim Flynn
Co-director, Vermont Framework Project
Vermont Department of Education



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

JUDITH A. BILLINGS OLD CAPITOL BUILDING • PO BOX 47200 • OLYMPIA WA 98504-7200

June 18, 1996

Shannon Ashpole
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Ms. Ashpole:

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your *Making Standards Matter* report and applaud your efforts to provide complete and accurate information about our standards development. In that vein, we do have concerns about your description of our standards.

We disagree with your judgment that our math and social studies standards are not specific enough or clear enough to form the basis for a common core curriculum (or, by implication, assessments). Considerable detail is available in the benchmark descriptions of skill, knowledge and performance levels. In addition, other aspects of our education reform efforts are helping to bring greater specificity to what will be expected of students and educators.

In 1993, our Legislature directed the Commission on Student Learning to develop academic standards and assessments by the year 2000-2001. The process for developing and refining the standards has informed and will continue to inform the development of test specifications, item specifications and test items themselves. The reciprocal is also true: a necessary step in the assessment development process is reaching consensus regarding concrete interpretation of the standards.

I would like to call your attention to two reasons why the standards were purposefully written at the current level of detail. First, in the state of Washington, school districts determine curriculum and are by law assigned the responsibility for selecting curricula and instructional methods. We have set state level standards that acknowledge the discretion local officials have to determine how to achieve the standards.

Second, our standards documents are not written exclusively for teachers and curriculum development staff. Educators no longer have the luxury of pursuing their profession in isolation from the broader community. We believe our standards can only succeed if they are embraced by the public.

Our aggressive public involvement efforts don't mean we've watered down the standards. The standards were developed by Subject Advisory Committees composed mainly of teachers in the appropriate content areas. But the public has been given a voice, and has been empowered to help shape the standards. Standards documents that are accessible to both educators and non-educators must necessarily be less detailed and less filled with jargon.

In relation to your concern about ensuring standards are world class, it's true that we did not examine translations of curricula from other languages and other countries. All our Subject Advisory Committees consulted available national standards documents. Our objective was to take the best from the national standards documents, international studies, standards from other states, and to consult other resource materials as appropriate.

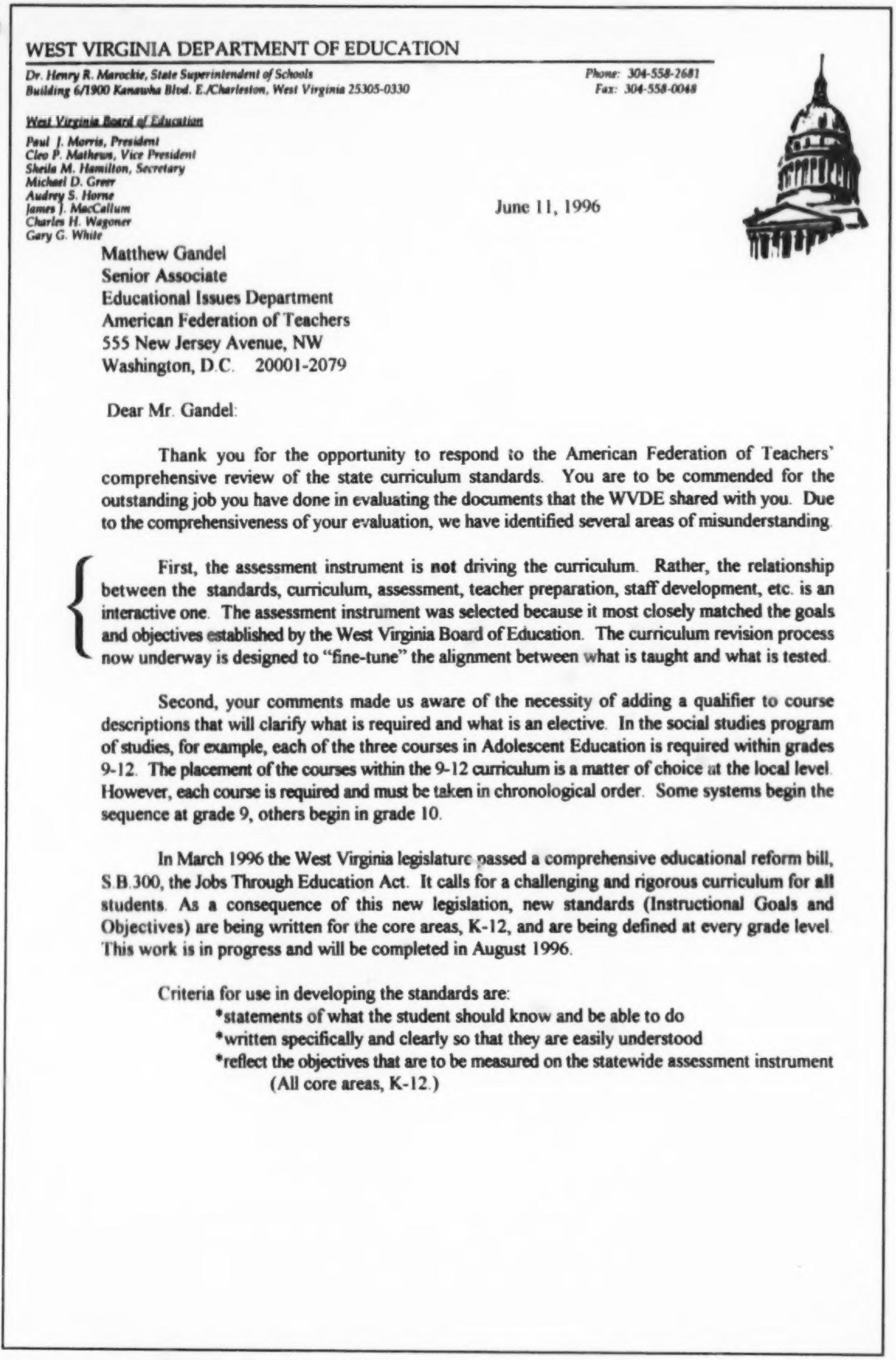
The result thus far of this work-in-progress is a standards-based reform effort that will significantly raise academic standards in core subjects and skills for all students in Washington and which at the same time, and not coincidentally, enjoys broad support from both the public and educators.

As you correctly point out, no specific intervention or remediation is required to help students or schools where there may be difficulty in reaching the new standards. However, as part of the Commission's mandate to develop and recommend to the Legislature and the Governor an accountabilty system, the Commission is required to recommend by December of 1998 "a system to intervene in schools and school districts in which significant numbers of students persistently fail to learn the essential academic learning requirements." (*RCW 28A.630.885(3)(iii)*.)

Sincerely,

Judith A. Billings

Judith A. Billings
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction



WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Henry R. Marockie, State Superintendent of Schools
Building 6/1900 Kanawha Blvd. E./Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0330

Phone: 304-558-2681
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June 11, 1996

Matthew Gandel
Senior Associate
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandel:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the American Federation of Teachers' comprehensive review of the state curriculum standards. You are to be commended for the outstanding job you have done in evaluating the documents that the WVDE shared with you. Due to the comprehensiveness of your evaluation, we have identified several areas of misunderstanding.

First, the assessment instrument is **not** driving the curriculum. Rather, the relationship between the standards, curriculum, assessment, teacher preparation, staff development, etc. is an interactive one. The assessment instrument was selected because it most closely matched the goals and objectives established by the West Virginia Board of Education. The curriculum revision process now underway is designed to "fine-tune" the alignment between what is taught and what is tested.

Second, your comments made us aware of the necessity of adding a qualifier to course descriptions that will clarify what is required and what is an elective. In the social studies program of studies, for example, each of the three courses in Adolescent Education is required within grades 9-12. The placement of the courses within the 9-12 curriculum is a matter of choice at the local level. However, each course is required and must be taken in chronological order. Some systems begin the sequence at grade 9, others begin in grade 10.

In March 1996 the West Virginia legislature passed a comprehensive educational reform bill, S.B.300, the Jobs Through Education Act. It calls for a challenging and rigorous curriculum for **all** students. As a consequence of this new legislation, new standards (Instructional Goals and Objectives) are being written for the core areas, K-12, and are being defined at every grade level. This work is in progress and will be completed in August 1996.

Criteria for use in developing the standards are:

- *statements of what the student should know and be able to do
- *written specifically and clearly so that they are easily understood
- *reflect the objectives that are to be measured on the statewide assessment instrument (All core areas, K-12.)

*Define a powerful content (what students should know) and skills (what students should be able to do.)

The mathematics program of studies is appended for your perusal. It is representative of the format through which each of the core areas will be presented.

The West Virginia Board of Education adopted a new statewide assessment instrument in May 1996. All students in grades K-12 will be assessed annually. You will find attached a listing of the content areas to be tested in each grade level.

The state accreditation process is in policy and requires schools to do an item analysis of individual student test results. The school must then develop an improvement plan that reflects how reteaching will occur for those students not scoring at the minimal level of proficiency (fiftieth percentile). High school students who fail to meet the minimal level of proficiency (fiftieth percentile) by tenth grade must retake the courses in which they are deficient until they demonstrate proficiency or they do not earn a warranty with their diploma.

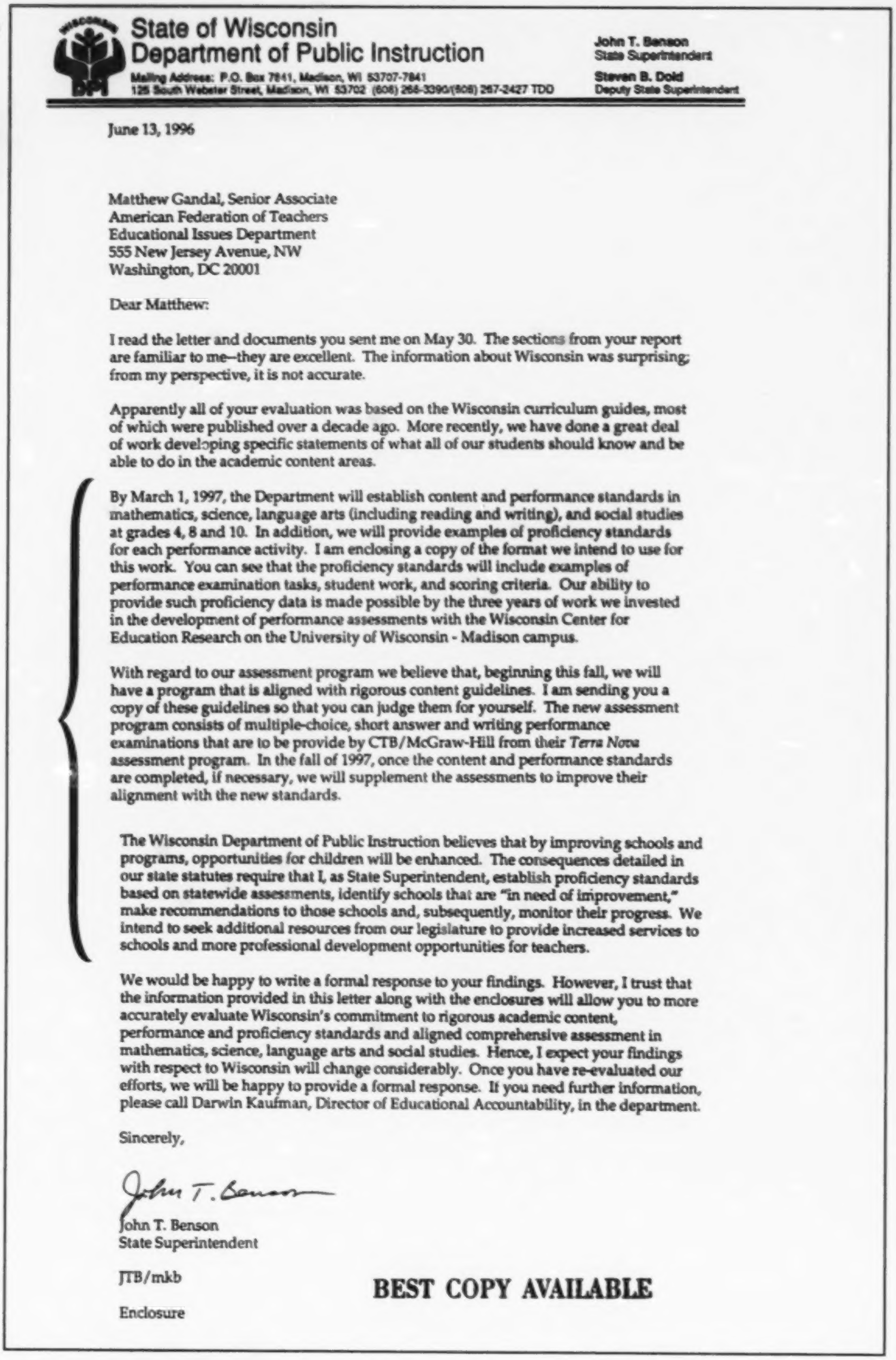
The reteaching component assures that uniformly high standards are being addressed. Remedial instruction often leads to "watered-down" content and skill proficiencies. Those schools having Title One resources are strongly encouraged to provide reteaching experiences through extended school day and/or extended school year. The K-4 curriculum focuses on the acquisition of the basic skills with a reallocation of time to ensure mastery.

Your concern with the previous English/ Language Arts Instructional Goals and Objectives policy was shared by others. While the previous policy provided that each local school district was to be responsible for the development of a sequenced K-12 program, it also required that all local school districts were to have their programs of study completed after the adoption of instructional materials and an assessment system. The programs of study were to have included a matrix that showed a learning system by grade level, that included the state goals, the state objectives, county grade level specific programs of study, and assessment benchmarks to measure student achievement. As part of the current effort under S.B.300, the entire English Language Arts program is being rewritten to be consistent with other areas of the core curriculum.

Please accept our gratitude for your leadership in this difficult area. You are to be commended for your vision and for the rigorous standards of proficiency that you have established for the state agencies. We have learned from you and our students will be the better for it!

Sincerely,

Henry Marockie
State Superintendent of Schools
President-Elect, CCSSO



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841
125 South Webster Street, Madison, WI 53702 (608) 266-3390/(608) 267-2427 TDD

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

Steven B. Dold
Deputy State Superintendent

June 13, 1996

Matthew Gandal, Senior Associate
American Federation of Teachers
Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Matthew:

I read the letter and documents you sent me on May 30. The sections from your report are familiar to me--they are excellent. The information about Wisconsin was surprising; from my perspective, it is not accurate.

Apparently all of your evaluation was based on the Wisconsin curriculum guides, most of which were published over a decade ago. More recently, we have done a great deal of work developing specific statements of what all of our students should know and be able to do in the academic content areas.

By March 1, 1997, the Department will establish content and performance standards in mathematics, science, language arts (including reading and writing), and social studies at grades 4, 8 and 10. In addition, we will provide examples of proficiency standards for each performance activity. I am enclosing a copy of the format we intend to use for this work. You can see that the proficiency standards will include examples of performance examination tasks, student work, and scoring criteria. Our ability to provide such proficiency data is made possible by the three years of work we invested in the development of performance assessments with the Wisconsin Center for Education Research on the University of Wisconsin - Madison campus.

With regard to our assessment program we believe that, beginning this fall, we will have a program that is aligned with rigorous content guidelines. I am sending you a copy of these guidelines so that you can judge them for yourself. The new assessment program consists of multiple-choice, short answer and writing performance examinations that are to be provide by CTB/McGraw-Hill from their *Terra Nova* assessment program. In the fall of 1997, once the content and performance standards are completed, if necessary, we will supplement the assessments to improve their alignment with the new standards.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction believes that by improving schools and programs, opportunities for children will be enhanced. The consequences detailed in our state statutes require that I, as State Superintendent, establish proficiency standards based on statewide assessments, identify schools that are "in need of improvement," make recommendations to those schools and, subsequently, monitor their progress. We intend to seek additional resources from our legislature to provide increased services to schools and more professional development opportunities for teachers.

We would be happy to write a formal response to your findings. However, I trust that the information provided in this letter along with the enclosures will allow you to more accurately evaluate Wisconsin's commitment to rigorous academic content, performance and proficiency standards and aligned comprehensive assessment in mathematics, science, language arts and social studies. Hence, I expect your findings with respect to Wisconsin will change considerably. Once you have re-evaluated our efforts, we will be happy to provide a formal response. If you need further information, please call Darwin Kaufman, Director of Educational Accountability, in the department.

Sincerely,

John T. Benson

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

JTB/mkb

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Enclosure

I watched your panel discussion last night, and I thought—the moment of levity was when Al Shanker said, "When I was teaching school and I would give students homework, they asked, 'Does it count?'" That's the thing I remember about the panel last night. All of you remember, too … "Does it count?" And the truth is that in the world we're living in today, "does it count" has to mean something, particularly in places where there haven't been any standards for a long time.

President Bill Clinton,
Address to the National Education Summit
March 27, 1996

What should good academic standards look like?
How do we "make them count"?
How do other countries do it?

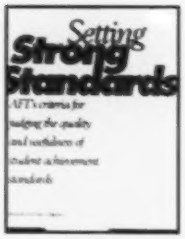
Introducing the AFT's Series on Standards, designed to tackle just these types of questions.

REACHING HIGH STANDARDS

Reaching High Standards: What We Mean and Why We Need It

Do we achieve high standards through the heroic individual efforts of students and teachers, or is much more required? This booklet lays out the case for systemic standards-based reform, including the need for rigorous, common standards, state-administered assessments, explicit rewards for achievement, and the establishment of special programs to help struggling students advance, step-by-step, until high standards are met. It also includes specific recommendations for the first steps to be taken toward reaching these goals.

Item no. 234. $2 each.



Criteria for Setting Strong Standards

To help bring clarity to the confused and often controversial issue of standards, the AFT has developed a set of criteria for educators to use in developing or reviewing student achievement standards. The booklet offers practitioners and policymakers a clear vision of what good standards should look like, illustrating its points with excerpts of actual standards.

Item no. 175. $2 each.

Making Standards Count
The Case for Student Incentives

Making Standards Count: The Case for Student Incentives

Adapted from an important address by AFT President Albert Shanker, this booklet warns that efforts to raise standards and improve U.S. education will fall short if we don't give students incentives to work hard by attaching consequences to how they achieve in school. Also included are materials comparing what college-bound U.S. high school students and their counterparts abroad are expected to know about biology.

Item no. 20. $2 each.

Making Standards Matter 1996: An Annual Fifty-State Report on Efforts To Raise Academic Standards

Which states are working toward developing higher standards? Which are setting standards that are clear and specific enough to be useful at the school level? Which have benchmarked their standards against the best that the rest of the world has to offer? How many are also developing assessments linked to their standards? How does your state measure up against what's happening around the country? This report, compiled from 1996 data, offers a state-by-state progress report in these key areas, and more.

Item no. 265. $10 each.

Defining World-Class Standards Series

This series of book-length studies lends graphic meaning to the idea of "world-class" standards, by examining what other nations expect their students to know and be able to do in various subjects and at different grade levels.

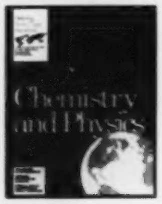
Vol. I. What College-Bound Students Abroad Are Expected To Know About Biology—This book looks at the actual translated biology exams taken by college-bound students in England and Wales, France, Germany and Japan, as well as scoring guides, sample answers and the U.S. Advanced Placement exam. It also offers a brief overview of each nation's educational system, plus a comparative look at how these different systems align their curricula, their exams, and their incentives—and how we in the U.S. generally fail to do so.

Item no. 250. $10 each.

What Secondary Students Abroad Are Expected To Know

Vol. II. What Secondary Students Abroad Are Expected To Know: Gateway Exams Taken by Average-Achieving Students in France, Germany and Scotland—This volume contains excerpts from exams taken and passed by most average-achieving students at the end of the 9th and 10th grade in: France (French, Math, and History/Geography); Germany (German, English, and Math); and Scotland (English, Math and Biology). It also includes a brief description of each country's school-to-work system, and, for comparison, the U.S. General Education Development (GED) practice test.

Item no. 251. $15 each.



Vol III. What College-Bound Students Abroad Are Expected To Know About Chemistry and Physics—This book contains the actual translated chemistry and physics exams taken by college-bound students in England and Wales, France, Germany and Japan, as well as scoring guides, sample answers and the U.S. Advanced Placement exams. It also offers a brief overview of each nation's educational system, plus a comparative look at how these different systems align their curricula, their exams, and their incentives—and how we in the U.S. generally fail to do so.

Item no. 252. $15 each.

Setting World-Class Standards Kits

To help those who have begun the work of reviewing or developing academic standards, the AFT has put together a series of boxed resource materials in core subject areas. The kits include: the AFT criteria for high-quality standards; translated standards and exams from abroad; materials from the AP and International Baccalaureate programs; and examples of some of the best national, state and local materials. *Kits are now available in: English/Language Arts ($40 each), History, Civics and Geography ($65 each), Mathematics ($50 each) and Science/Biology ($65 each). A supplementary science kit on high school Physics and Chemistry can be ordered with the main science kit ($90 for both), or can be ordered separately ($35).*

Mail to: American Federation of Teachers Order Dept.
555 New Jersey Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20001

Item No. (or kit name)	Quantity	Cost

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